

An interview with Milton Shubert Sebree

MILTON SHUBERT SEBREE

An Interview Conducted by

Tom King

June 7, 1980

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NARRATOR DATA SHEET

Name of narrator: Milton Shubert Sebree

Address: 213 North 13th St., Terre Haute Phone:

Birthdate: 04/16/1890 Birthplace: Mt. Carmel, IL

Date of death: 06-21-80

Length of residence in Terre Haute:

Education:

Occupational history: Employed in the glass industry locally and at one time established a photography studio.

Special interests, activities, etc. Organized labor leader, associate of Eugene V. Debs. For additional information see attached obituary.

Major subject(s) of interview: Economy and social customs of Terre Haute, depression, General Strike of 1935

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Interviewing sessions:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Interviewer</u>
06/07/80		Sebree's residence	Tom King, Indiana University

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH PROJECT

MILTON SHUBERT SEBREE

Interviewed

by

R. T. King

7 June 1980

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE: Milton Schubert Sebree
INTERVIEWER: R. T. King
SUBJECT: Terre Haute, 1897-1940
DATE: 7 June 1980
TRANSCRIBER: Pauline Gliessman

Mr. King: The following is an interview with Schubert Sebree. It is being conducted in Mr. Sebree's home in Terre Haute, Indiana on 7 June 1980. I am R. T. King.

Mr. Sebree, does the Indiana University Oral History Research Project have your permission to make this interview available to interested parties for purposes of study or research?

Mr. Sebree: It has my permission with the understanding that this material shall be free to any individual for publication or reproduction.

K: Thank you. Now, I'd like to begin the interview by having you tell me something about your personal life, beginning with when and where you were born.

S: I was born in Mt. Carmel, Illinois, 16 April 1890. My father was a member of the American Railway Union [founded by Eugene V. Debs, 1894] organized by Jay Evans. He was a brakeman and sometimes a conductor on a freight line between Mt. Carmel, Illinois and Paris, Illinois. And when the American Railway Union went on a sympathetic strike with the Pullman workers he was discharged and blacklisted, and for two-and-a-half years he searched for employment. And finally by changing his first name....

K: Changing it from what to what?

S: His name was Albert Austin Sebree. He changed it to A. A. Sebree and he was able to secure employment here in Terre Haute working for the Evansville-Terre Haute Railroad as a switchman. So when he had earned enough money to bring his family to Terre Haute, why, he provided for their transportation and we moved into our home--a home by my grandmother--located at 1414 Maple Avenue here in Terre Haute.

K: What year would that have been?

S: This was around 1907. Now wait a moment...1897. I was a little past 7 years of age when we came to Terre Haute. This house was like many houses for poor people--it was poorly constructed, it was unlined, no subfloor. Aside from the heat from the cook stove and the heating stove, outside temperatures prevailed throughout the house. I remember before going to bed someone would bank the fire with ashes, but by morning the temperature in the winter would go up to the freezing point and we'd have frozen ice in the bucket and we'd have to thaw it out or throw it out and get fresh water. Now, this was a three-room house and 6 people were living in it.

K: Did you have 3 brothers and sisters? When you say 6 people....

S: I had 2 brothers, and my mother and father and my brother's daughter, my niece, and we were all living in this three-room house. We had one closet in this house and that served to take care of the clothing situation. If we had any extra clothing we pulled the bed away from the wall--a highboard bed--and drove nails in the back, and that accommodated other garments that couldn't be put in the closet.

Now, the fact that these crowded conditions prevailed was nothing new. I had grown up under such conditions, so I felt no reason to object to the situation. This was the time and the situation back in 1897 when I came to Terre Haute.

K: You had said that your father was employed at the railroad here in Terre Haute.

S: Yes, the Evansville and Terre Haute Railroad.

K: And what was he doing here?

S: He was a switchman. He worked for this railroad until he was 54 years of age and died of cancer of the stomach. He was well thought of by the employees. He was a member of the switchmen's union and the Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen, an active union man all during his lifetime. He was a friend of Jay Evans and a great admirer of Jay Evans.

K: What can you tell me about railroad activity here in Terre Haute at the turn of the century?

S: Well, Terre Haute was reached by a large number of railroads--the Pennsylvania and the Big Four...Evansville and Terre Haute brought traffic from Chicago and from the east, and from the west and north, so it was a thriving railroad center. Pennsylvania Railroad had its shops here. They wrecked freight cars and rebuilt them, and it was a terminal. The roundhouses made repairs on engines, so a great many people were employed on the railroad at that time that lived here in Terre Haute. And it, in large measure, accounted for the prosperity of the city.

K: Was your father well paid by the standards of the day?

S: The railroad workers earned \$10 to \$15 a week. The pay for common labor was \$1.50 a day, so by comparison the railroad workers here in Terre Haute at that time were well paid. In addition to that they worked a great deal of overtime, and occasionally my father's earnings would run better than \$100 a month counting the overtime. So that was considered to be way above the average of common labor.

K: Now, I know that you were very young at the time but I'm wondering if you might be able to describe for me a typical working day in the life of your father.

S: Most of the time my father was working overtime. Sometimes he'd work 14 hours in a day. The 10-hour day was the standard at that time, I believe, on the railroads. And later it was shortened to 9, but for several years after my father came here I believe the 10-hour work day was standard on the railroads in this area.

K: When I say describe a working day, I mean is it possible for you to tell me what your father did from the time he got up until the time he came home at night?

S: Well, he would get up about 5:30 in the morning.

K: Did the rest of the family get up at the same time?

S: The family would get up at the same time. He would get up and use the shaker and throw coal in the stove, and get the rooms warm enough for others to get up and dressed. My mother would get up then and she would start the breakfast in the kitchen. People ate hearty in those days. It was not unusual to put a pound or a pound-and-a-half of bacon in a skillet and 10 or 15 eggs. People would eat 3 or 4 eggs and a quarter pound of bacon before they'd go to work because the work was very strenuous and they required a lot of food in order to maintain their strength.

My father would get all ready for his work and if it was winter-time he would put on 2 pair of pants in addition to his red underwear and his shirt. Then he'd put on 2 coats and on top of that his overcoat. And then to keep out the cold he'd tie a rope around his overcoat to keep his clothing close to his body. Sometimes he would forget and he would leave his pipe in his hip pocket, and after he was all ready to take off he'd want to smoke and then he'd have to undo the rope and find a way of getting back to the pocket there to get the pipe. And when this occurred it aggravated him and sometimes he'd go away in a very bad mood.

Always before leaving he'd kiss me goodbye. This practice was the result of the hazards involved in railroading. When he left the house he never knew that he would come back in the evening safe and sound because there were many accidents on the railroad and many fatalities. And so this custom of kissing me when he left continued until I was 14 or 15 years old. I remember what a letdown it was when he came to me one day and he said, "I'll not kiss you today; I'll just shake hands."

K: Was he ever seriously injured?

S: Yes, on 2 different occasions. Once he started to cross a track after getting off the caboose of the train he was on and he was struck by another train that was pulling into the station. It hit him with such force it knocked him about 75 feet and he was unconscious for several days. He had a head injury that was very severe. After several months he recovered, though, and was able to go back to railroading. But there were no workmen's compensations and no unemployment insurance--no way of cushioning the shock of unemployment.

The second injury was of a minor nature. He came very near losing his foot. It resulted in a leg injury, but he was wearing a shoe that permitted him to pull his foot out of the shoe when it was caught in a switch. And this often happened. People that didn't have shoes that had elastic in them and they couldn't get their shoe loose, they'd lose their leg. They'd just have to fall off the track and let the car roll over their leg.

K: Were there shoes specially designed for that purpose?

S: Yes, they were called Converse Shoes at the time and they were built more like slippers than shoes. They permitted you...if you got your foot caught in one of these "frogs," they called it, you could pull your foot out of the shoe and escape injury.

K: How was it possible to get your foot caught in the switch? Can you describe that for me?

S: Well, you would be running to throw the switch for the cut of cars [that] you would signal to be pushed back, and if you slipped on ice or anything like that your foot might go in this open switch. And if your foot went in with sufficient force, why, it would be caught in there. You couldn't get a foot out and you didn't have much time to worry about it too. So these Converse Shoes were invented to protect railroaders from this type of accident.

K: Do you know whether or not that condition still exists? Is it still possible...?

S: I don't think so. Now, it would be possible for you to get caught in that situation today, but the methods of switching have improved to the point where the signal is not given until you are free to give it, you know, and out of danger. But back in those days the switchmen were under pressure all the time. It was a speed-up job and in order to hasten the work sometimes the signal would be given to back other cars before the switch was thrown. The switchman would run ahead of the cars and throw the switch and send the cut of cars into the right area.

K: Did you ever accompany your father on a working day?

S: No, I never did. I went with him a time or two to the switchmen's headquarters where the man in charge of the switchmen had his office, but I never watched him at his work. From the very beginning he wanted me to escape the hazards of railroad life, so he discouraged any thought on my part of becoming a railroader. He said it was much too hazardous. You see, he had begun working when they had the old-fashioned link and pin coupling and you had to walk in between the cars and drop the pin down through these 2 loops of iron. If there was any miscalculation by the engineer and the cut was given too much momentum the man would be crushed in between these cars. Later on they invented the coupling that you could operate from the side of the car outside of danger. But when they began railroading, this coupling had not been invented and so many,

many people were killed by misjudgment on the part of the engineer. The cut of cars would be on an incline that would increase speed or...by miscalculation on the part of the engineer the cars would come together with too great a force and the man between them would be crushed.

K: During this period that we're discussing--the early part of the twentieth century--did your father work a 10 to 14-hour day 5 days a week, or was he employed 6 days a week?

S: He worked 6 days a week. However, occasionally he would get off on a Sunday. If there was no great pressure as a switchman, why, Sundays were free, but the other 6 days of the week there was a lot of switching to be done to accommodate the breweries and distilleries and all the other factories around over the area, and to make up trains and so forth. So he worked 6 days every week and for the most part worked overtime from 2 hours to 4 or 5 hours.

K: Was there any seasonal variation to the work?

S: Well, I couldn't be accurate about that because I don't remember, I would think that in the wintertime the increased production of coal and increased activity on the part of industry in general would make the fall and winter months more active than those in the summer. Of course, there were many industries that their production remained normal throughout the year: the distilleries and the breweries and the glass factory. So aside from coal and some other industries, why, I would think the switching problem would be about the same except for a few months during the fall and winter.

K: Did your father ever have a vacation?

S: I remember on 2 or 3 occasions...my father's brother had a drinking problem and when he would get on a binge sometimes he'd get in arguments and end up in a fight. So, he was on a binge in Paris, Illinois, and he wound up in a fight. Some of the neighbors involved in this fracas wanted him to submit to a mental examination, so they forced him to take this examination before the local doctor. The doctor didn't declare him insane, but whatever he did or said during this interview made my uncle angry. So the next time he got on a binge he took his spite out on the doctor and I guess he wrecked the office. So this time he was sent to Kankakee [Illinois] for mental treatment. While he was there my father decided to pay him a visit, and so he got away from his work for a couple of days and he made this trip to Kankakee. Now, that was one occasion.

K: When was that? About what year would that be?

S: Oh, it would have been about 1902, somewhere in that period. Then he took a day off when his mother died to attend the funeral. He took another day off when his father died to attend that funeral. And then he was laid off for 30 days. During the switching he had made a blunder and a car and its contents had been damaged through this blunder in switching. And so as a means of discipline he was given a 30 day leave of absence.

K: Was that commonly done then?

S: Oh, yes. They gave you a leave of absence and sometimes 60 days or 90 days, according to the severity of the accident.

K: Can you recall about what year that would have been?

S: This would have been about 1902 or '03. Maybe a little later than that. Anyway, it was after the stamping mill had been built here in Terre Haute and I would think that would have placed it maybe around 1904.

K: Is that the Columbian [Enameling and] Stamping Mill we're talking about?

S: Yes. So my father couldn't go without a paycheck for 30 days and a friend of his introduced him to a foreman over the dipping room at the stamping mill. My father was hired to carry dishpans and chamber pots and things like that from the dippers to the baking ovens where this glaze was brought to a high temperature and turned into glass. I described that in an article I wrote. My father was in good health, otherwise I don't think he could have stood the strain of the first day. But when he took this job it was a 12 hour day and he had to run all day long in a dog trot from the dippers to the baking oven carrying the trays above his head and then setting them down so they could be put into the ovens. When he came home he was too tired to eat, and the next morning--around 4 o'clock in the morning--my mother and my brother and myself began to massage his leg muscles because he couldn't get out of bed, he had cramps. Finally, we were able to get him to the table and he ate a light breakfast because he didn't have an appetite, and then he hobbled off to work for another day. At the end of the week his leg muscles had become accustomed to this strain of running and he continued to work there during that 30 day period when he was laid off from the railroad. When the day came for him to go back on the railroad he had misgivings. He didn't know whether he wanted to stay at the stamping mill or continue railroading.

K: Why was that?

S: Well, he saw the hazards of railroading. While this job at the stamping mill was a terrible strain on your constitution, there were no severe hazards connected with it. I think that was probably the factor that he considered.

K: What was the difference in pay?

S: Well, the difference favored the railroad. As a railroader he made more money. That was another thing that influenced his decision.

K: From what you've been telling me I gather that the only time that he ever got off was when something untoward had occurred.

S: That's right--some tragedy in the family or something like that.

He never had a vacation in all the years that I remember. And occasionally--once a month I believe it was--he was given 2 or 3 hours to go to the jewelers and have his watch checked, because the watches all had to be accurate and he was allowed this free time away from his employment for that purpose.

K: What sort of an effect did this have on family life?

S: Well, you could imagine that my father was with me very little of his time, and he was the best educated, best informed, and probably the most intelligent member of my family. If he had been with me more hours to encourage and direct me it would have probably had a profound influence upon my goals in life. Certainly he would have stimulated my interest in learning because he had a retentive memory. He could recite statistics and dates connected with the Civil War; he was a Civil War fan.

K: Which side did he favor?

S: Oh, the North, of course. As a matter of fact, my grandfather, Anderson V. Sebree, was located in Paris, Kentucky, before the outbreak of the Civil War. He was a cabinetmaker and also contracted and built houses. But the sentiment in Paris, Kentucky, was so strongly in favor of the South that the local people boycotted his business. And so he moved from Paris, Kentucky, to Paris, Illinois, to escape this persecution. And that was why he made the move that he did at the time he did.

So my grandfather and my uncle were in the Civil War, and, of course, my father took pride in the fact that they were Civil War veterans. As I say, he was a Civil War fan. He knew the activities of the generals and how stupid some of them were and so on. When he got talking about Civil War, why, he could quote page after page of history including all the statistics of losses on both sides and the blunders of both generals and so on. And this was indicative of the type of mind he possessed--a very intelligent man.

K: While your father was away during the day at his job what did the other members of the family do?

S: My mother was very much interested in people. She had a very loving nature and she sympathized with the plight of everyone. Even though they were better off than she was, she could see problems that they faced, and felt deep sympathy for them. So, most of her time was spent in talking with neighbors, chatting. And then she raised chickens and she raised a garden and her interest in these chickens...they became pets and she would let them die of old age rather than eat them. She was that type of person, you see--a very outgoing, generous person.

In her desire to help people she would rob herself and her family in order to do this. If she had been more sensible about her generosity, then the family would have fared better. But as it was, oftentimes she would use money that my father earned, that should have gone someplace else in supporting a family, and used it to help

somebody that she thought needed it worse than she did.

But my mother was a profound influence on me. She was not an intellectual person. She could read and write but she didn't care too much about reading or about books. Her primary interest was just living from day to day and getting pleasure out of daily existence.

K: What about yourself? What did you do during the day?

S: Well, I have very little formal schooling. In Mt. Carmel, Illinois, before we left there, I was 6 years of age and my parents decided to send me to school. They had brought out a book called Little Lord Fauntleroy. His costume had been portrayed in this book and, like the T-shirts and other paraphernalia you see today, anything that was popular was bound to be popularized in many ways. So the Little Lord Fauntleroy costumes became the rage, and my mother, wanting me to be suitably dressed, she purchased one of these costumes and dressed me in it before taking me to school. You can imagine how absurd it was. So she introduced me to the teacher and then she thought I might not feel at ease, so she asked permission of the teacher to sit in the seat with me until the noon hour came. She was a big woman, weighed 200 pounds. And here I was a little 6 year old kid. I can imagine how the other students in the room viewed the situation. At any rate, there was a lot of tittering and display of humor that had no relation to the work in the schoolroom.

At the noon hour she took me home and gave me my noonday meal, and without changing the costume she sent me back to play with the kids. The kids were very friendly when I returned and they got me to play Crack the Whip. Have you ever seen Winslow Homer's Crack the Whip?

K: No, I haven't seen the painting.

S: Well, you can imagine what happened to me, because I was on the end--I was the cracker. Over at one side of the school yard they had a pump on a platform--one of those old fashioned wooden pumps--and iron dippers fastened by chains. And from excess pumping and rains and so on there was a regular hog wallow around that pump for several feet, about 3 or 4 inches deep. So they cracked me into that mud puddle. Every kid in school rushed over, and some supposedly to help, but they rolled me around and around in that mud. They stuck mud in my ears and they stuffed mud down my shirt and my pants. Well, I came up fighting and I had the satisfaction of hitting several of them. The teacher came out and got us separated and sent me home. And I quit school; that was my first and only day in school in Mt. Carmel.

Then when we moved to Terre Haute and I reached the age of 10, my cousin....

K: You had still not been in school until the age of 10?

S: No, I hadn't gone to school. One of my cousins--I had learned my alphabet and had learned to read a little--she had persuaded my

mother to start me to school again. So, this time I was to go to this school at Twelfth and Chestnut Street. It's now a laundry.

K: What was the name of the school?

S: I can't recall the name; it had a district number. Anyway, I insisted on dressing in overalls or a costume that I wouldn't share the same fate I did in that Lord Fauntleroy costume. So, my mother took me in to introduce me to the teachers and she left. The teacher asked me several questions and then she beckoned to 2 other teachers. These 3 teachers gathered around me and plied me with questions and then they went over and had a little conference and I could catch most of what was said. And I understood them to say, "Well, he knows so little he really ought to start in the first grade, but we can't start him there because he's so big." So they said, "Well, let's compromise and put him in the third grade and see how he does."

So I was assigned to the third grade. Well, I did very well for about 10 days, 2 weeks. I would get my lessons at home and nothing went wrong with my reciting. And on a Thursday of each week a drawing teacher came in to conduct the class in drawing. On these occasions 2 young girls would be selected and one would stand facing the children and the other would stand with her back to them and we were supposed to draw the human figure. But I misunderstood the instructions--probably daydreaming--so I included both teachers and the 2 girls and a lot of other extraneous material. When they picked up the drawings the teachers were laughing, and I was very sensitive to ridicule so I thought they might be laughing at my crude drawings and that didn't set well with me.

Another week or 2 went by. The boy who sat in front of me, I didn't like him. He was a kind of a stool pigeon--the other kids knew it. But I was asked to read out of my third reader and I came to a word that I couldn't pronounce. So I whispered in a very low tone of voice, "How do you pronounce this word?" And instead of answering me and helping me out he starts waving his hand and yelling, "Teacher, teacher, this boy back of me is asking me how to pronounce words for him."

So, I began pounding him over the head with my third reader and I said, "Teacher, he's a goddam liar. I only asked him to pronounce one word." The teacher rushed forward and got us separated and she said, "Now, you go home and when you come back at the noon hour you go to the principal."

Well, I knew that meant a paddling. So, I left the schoolroom and I waited outside until school was dismissed at the lunch hour and when this kid came out to get on his bicycle I jerked him off and started beating up on him. The teacher rushed to the rescue, you know, and separated us. But I went home and then I colored my story to my mother and I said, "I'm not going back and get a paddling by that principal. I'll quit school for good." So I quit and I never went to school another day. Now, my formal schooling, I think, would total about 2 weeks. It's not anything to brag about.

K: Were the sons and daughters of railroad workers treated any differently in the public education system?

S: I don't think there was any discrimination. Practically everybody in Terre Haute was [poor], except maybe the 2 percent of the elite, and as far as I can recollect in this school class we were all equal. And I couldn't pick anyone out saying that they belonged to an elite group. However, when the Lynds conducted their survey conditions had changed a great deal and there you had your separation into classes or groups.

K: Now you are talking about the book Middletown?

S: Yes. And I don't think it existed in Terre Haute at that time, to that degree. Certainly I was not conscious of it, not aware of it.

K: Were there identifiable railroader neighborhoods in Terre Haute?

S: Less so than other industrial neighborhoods.

K: Why would that be so?

S: Well the railroaders, you see, they were scattered around over Terre Haute within walking distance of the place where they were assigned to work, and this happened to be at Tenth and Poplar Street at the time.

K: That's where your father was assigned?

S: Yes. So people living anywhere in Terre Haute would have about the same distance to walk to get there to start their day's work and so they were scattered. Now, in the case of the glass factory or brick yards or other factories then the people had a tendency to live close to the factory because they wanted to be within easy walking distance of the plant. That more or less tended to segregate them in certain areas as a result of plant location.

K: Were any occupations identified with any particular ethnic groups in Terre Haute at that time?

S: Well, of course, the Negro is an ethnic group. He was looked upon with tolerance to a degree, but he was separated from the whites by race prejudice--very strongly. And then there were many people coming in from Europe: from Poland, Hungary and Austria and Czechoslovakia and various other countries. And each language group tended to segregate themselves more or less. And when the Malleable [Standard Malleable Castings Co.] Iron Plant located here they brought in quite a few of these foreign workers to work in their plant. The stamping mill did the same thing.

K: For what purpose, did you ever know?

S: Well, cheap labor. They could work them 12 hours and pay them little or nothing. Also, there were health hazards connected with

many of the occupations. In the case of the stamping mill they treated the metal with acid and if you breathed those acid fumes for any length of time, why, it brought on emphysema or some lung ailment. There were physical hazards because they operated punch presses. People lost their fingers and their hands because they didn't have proper guards, things of that sort. So many of these foreign-born people that came here lived on as little as possible for 2 or 3 years and saved every penny they could. Then they returned to Europe and they had enough money to become proprietors of the little landed estate or a merchant or something. Others came here and wanted to be permanent residents so they stayed here and built homes and educated their children and became good citizens, and their kids are now functioning in politics and business and every way and certainly it was the melting pot for them. However, when the stamping mill was first built, on the outside of the fence--they had a high board fence surrounding the plant--on the outside of that board fence there were lean-to bunk houses built to accommodate foreign-born workers.

K: With the fence serving as one of the walls for the lean-to?

S: Well, the fence served as part of the wall and then they just built out over that and made a place where these...about say 6 or 7 feet wide and 12 or 14 feet long. And there were two bunks put in each one of these little apertures and sometimes they were rented to 2 people on 2 shifts. One would work 12 hours and he'd sleep in the bunk and the other guy would get off after his 12 hour shift and replace the occupant. And they were the people who saved every penny and returned to Europe. But after a few years, why, the situation changed and most of the people that came here as immigrants stayed here permanently and became citizens.

K: Now, were any particular ethnic groups identified with any particular occupations?

S: Well, Lithuanians and Hungarians and Poles worked mostly for the Malleable. The same might apply to the stamping mill. Now, there were other types of employment where minimum skills were required and where a language barrier meant very little in working. They would work in those occupations--brick yards. But the breweries and the distilleries required language barriers be more or less removed so a great many Germans that spoke English worked at breweries and distilleries. And they worked in the cooperage plants and elsewhere here in Terre Haute. But the Germans were a very superior type of immigrant to the ones who came from other parts of Europe at that particular time. Most of them very quickly learned English and they were more or less accepted in the community on a coequal basis. But the Italians were referred to as Nops and the Poles and other Europeans were called Hunkies. And the native born, English speaking American felt superior to these groups.

K: Was there any sort of overt discrimination against these groups that you were aware of?

S: Well, the Negroes, of course, were discriminated against. For instance, they were prevented from joining unions for years and years. No glassblower could be a Negro and that held true of the carpenters and many occupations. And so they were forced, if they found employment in these avocations, they were forced to work as nonunion employees. This tended, of course, to build up the race prejudice on the part of whites because of the economic pressures coming from these groups that were not unionized. So, that was a very important factor back in those days.

K: Now, earlier I had asked you something about what your day was like when you were young, before you had become employed and while your father was going away to work in the railroad yards every day for 12 to 14 hours. You told me that you had about 2 or 3 weeks of formal education. What did you do the rest of the time, from the time you were 7 until the time you...?

S: Well, after I began to read proficiently I read nickel novels: the Merrivilles and the Fred Fearnorts and the Nick Carters and all those nickel novels that today collectors pay huge sums for. If I'd saved my collection I'd be wealthy. Now, a lot has been said against the nickel novel but for the most part they were not bad reading for a young boy. Most of the characters were highly moral in their concepts and their behavior. The Merrivilles were athletes; they didn't drink, they didn't run after women. The James boys, they were justified in what they did because the railroads, when they were built they dispossessed the people who had established claims on the land along the right-of-way and the Pinkerton thugs came and drove them out. So if they got killed while they were doing that, that was justifiable. It was a case of Robin Hood and if you were dispossessed, robbed of your land, you had a perfect right to regain it if you could, even if it meant bloodshed.

I would say that these nickel novels did me no harm and for the most part they did me a lot of good because they provided me with a pastime. While other boys were working I was reading this type of literature. And then when the Wright brothers outdid Jules Verne or any of the writers of exciting fiction of that type--every week came out with a new issue and some machine would bore under the earth and another would have 7 rotors and fly through the air. Another you'd have a napsack on your back and you'd press a button and it was an antigravity outfit and you could go anyplace any time. So, these were very exciting adventure stories, they stimulated my imagination.

And later on, of course, my lifestyle changed. I went through a religious period and I was disappointed to discover that the man I had the greatest faith in didn't know what he was talking about.

K: Who was that?

S: A minister. So, I turned my attention to the Public Library and to reading books on science and sociology and many, many subjects that stimulated my curiosity even more and gave me a realistic outlook on the universe and a philosophical acceptance of life that I

could only have obtained through reading this other type of literature.

K: To go back to that earlier period though, from the time you were 7 until--well later on--I don't know exactly when you first became employed. But I'm wondering if you were able to do anything that would help the family financially during that period?

S: My first employment was working for a painter who did moonlighting and he painted carriages. My job was to sand the running gears of the vehicle and the spokes and so on and get the old paint off, and give it the first coat. He paid me 25¢ a week so I couldn't make very large contributions to the family from that income.

K: How old were you when you took that job?

S: Oh, I was probably 11 years old.

K: How many hours a week would you work at that?

S: Oh, I'd work maybe an average of 2 or 3 hours a day until I got tired. I was rewarded more by being taken for a drive on Sunday in his carriage.

Now, the first job that I actually got money for was working in the glass factory. There was a glass factory located here that made fruit jars.

K: Can you recall the name of it?

S: Terre Haute Glass [Manufacturing] Company. It was called the Streeter Plant because a man by the name of [Harry W.] Streeter was a heavy stockholder in it and the man that started the Root Glass Company was the general manager, C. J. [Chapman G.] Root. My brother was employed there working as a chipper. Now, a chipper had a file and when the fruit jars were made there were rough edges on the top and this file smoothed those down to the point where you wouldn't cut your hand when you screwed the lid on the jar. So knowing my desire to earn money he found employment for me working there. And my job, after 12 fruit jars were put in a carton and the top cemented down, my job was to load these cartons on a truck, push them to the back of the building, and stack them so that later on they could be conveyed to the warehouse. Well, when I started working it seemed like an easy job just to pick up 12 pounds or 18 pounds and set it on that truck and push it away and then unload. But by the end of the day my arms were so tired and I was so exhausted that I could hardly stand up. And I continued this work for several weeks, and then I was called to work out in the storage shed. And the building where these jars were stored had a tin roof.

Mrs. Sebree: Tell him about when you went to sleep and the thing caught on fire.

S: We're recording.

Mrs. Sebree: Oh, are you?

S: This building had a tin roof--sheet metal roof--and I was put up at the top because I was so small, and I was supposed to put the last boxes in place up near the top of this roof. It was in August and the temperature was very high and the boss noted I was ready to faint so he said, "Take those empty water buckets and go across the railroad tracks to the Wheat's store and get some drinking water for us."

K: To the Wheat store?

S: Yes, the [N. S.] Wheat [and Company] grocery store [1525 Maple Avenue], operated on the west side of the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks, just a hundred feet or so away from the tracks. This glass factory was located in between the Pennsylvania tracks and the Big Four tracks and on the south side of Maple Avenue here in Terre Haute.

K: And you had to go to the grocery store in order to get water for the plant? Did the glass factory have no pump or anything?

S: The glass factory had water but it was warm water and this was cool right out of the pump. So I was too exhausted when I reached the pump, I just set the buckets down and went home. So that terminated my employment. So I didn't work again then until the following spring and then I became an employee of the North Baltimore [Bottle] Glass Company. Now, their plant was in between the same tracks but located on the north side of Maple Avenue. So, I worked for the North Baltimore [Bottle] Glass Company for 16 years. I worked as a common laborer, carry-in boy, and so forth, for 4 years. Then I became an indentured apprentice and worked 4 more years--that was 8. Then I worked 8 more years as a journeyman glassblower, making a total of 16 years.

K: And you began working when--1902 there?

S: I think, somewhere in that area.

K: Now, can you tell me something about your decision to work at the Baltimore Glass Works? What led you to seek employment there?

S: Well, as I said early in the interview my father discouraged me from going to work on a railroad, and the fact that glass bottle blowers were the aristocrats of labor. They were making anywhere from \$6 to \$9 a day while common labor was making \$9 a week. So, they saw an opportunity for me to become a journeyman glassblower and become a high wage earner. So, my brothers and my father persuaded me that this was my best chance.

K: Now before we changed the tapes I had asked you something concerning your--a question concerning your decision to seek employment at the glass works, and I believe you were expanding on that for me.

S: Yes, I did it because I was persuaded by my father and my brothers that this would offer me an opportunity to become a high wage earner, that the glassblowers made from \$6 to \$9 a day while a common

laborer was paid \$1.50 a day.

K: Now, what process did you have to go through in order to gain employment then?

S: Well, as a boy laborer all you had to do was apply for a job because there was such a demand for child labor at that period that there was no problem finding employment. And the glass factory, because of the heat and the soda ash and irritating materials that got into your clothing, it was not a very pleasant occupation. The soda ash caused your skin to break out and itch and you had to breath gas fumes and these deposits of soda ash that was used in the glass mix, so some people thought it was an unhealthful occupation. But I would say that it was not more hazardous to health than the hundreds and hundreds of other occupations. And the reason glassblowers--many of them died young was because they became addicts to alcohol; they drank themselves to death. The big money they earned they didn't know how to spend it and so they went out on binges and wild parties. And venereal disease and consumption and some of these other ailments they fell heir to, not because of the hazards of the occupation but rather to abusing their own health.

K: Was this type of behavior more common among glassblowers in Terre Haute than among other working groups?

S: Well, it would be on account of their higher earnings.

K: You say it was more common here in Terre Haute than it was....

S: Yes, you know, even visiting a prostitute you were limited by your income, and the amount of alcohol you could drink was also limited by your income. So because they were high wage earners if they had habits of this kind why they could indulge them to greater excesses.

K: Did the glassblowers have any particular ethnic identity?

S: No, except many of them, because they were high wage earners, many of them were more than ordinarily conceited. They, like nearly everybody during the period, measured success in terms of dollars--earning power--and the power that goes with earning power. And so they had more of this type of power than people who made \$9 a week, therefore, they felt somewhat superior to the \$9 a week wage earner. This was not true of all but it was typical of many.

K: I'd like now for you, if you can, to describe for me in detail your work experience during those sixteen years with the North Baltimore [Bottle] Glass Company. Begin when you were hired in and tell me the various stages you went through, and describe for me the various jobs that you had performed.

S: Well, to begin with, my first job at the North Baltimore [Bottle] Glass Company was wheeling coke to the annealing ovens. Not very long before I went to work in the glass factory they had invented the continuous annealing oven. It was on a chain and trays were set

in place on this chain and then they moved forward from the heated area on back to the back of the plant, and there they were cold enough that people could take them off of the annealing pans and sort them for defects. So, the temperature in the front where the bottles were being made had to be high enough so that the bottles wouldn't break when they were put in there at a high temperature. And in order to keep that temperature up they burned coke. And so I had to keep all these layers--I think there were 6 or 8 of them in a row--I had to keep coke in front of all of them and shovel it in when it was needed. So this meant pushing a great big wheelbarrow loaded with coke.

K: And you were 11, 12 years old at that time?

S: I was 12 years old--a little past 12.

K: Was that a job that generally fell to child labor?

S: Well, if you were a good strong boy like I was why it was OK. I stayed on that job for a day or two and then they needed a carry-in boy, and they gave my job to a newcomer and transferred me to carrying in. Well, now the term "carrying-in"...you had a paddle with a long handle. On the front of the paddle was 2 trench-like devices. And bottles, after they had been produced by the glassblower, were set into a mold that tipped so you took this paddle and you pushed it under the mold and that tipped the bottles out on your carrying paddle. So, then you turned and ran back to your annealing layer and by a short jerk of the handle you would jerk them off of the paddle, and by elevating the end of the paddle slightly you would set them up on end. Now if you didn't possess skill you would tip the bottles over, and once they got over you had to take a long hook with a prong and set these up individually. Well, the carrying-in boy didn't have time to set up the fallen bottles and it took a day or two to develop skill to set them in there properly. So, during that time the heat from the annealing layers burned off my eye lashes and burned blisters all over both hands and I was crying from the torture of having to continue to work under those conditions.

K: Did you wear any protective clothing, any protective gloves?

S: No, you wore gloves. That was the only protection you had. So, my boss, he saw my condition and he said, "If you can stick it out for 2 days you'll be all right. You can see these other boys are doing it and they're not suffering at all, so if you just have the courage stick it out for 2 more days. Those blisters will start to heal and you'll develop enough skill that you can go on with the operation." So, his encouragement caused me to stay. Then later on I was transferred from carrying-in boy to what they called the taking-out boy. Now, the job of the taking-out boy was to remove the bottle from the iron mold, put it in what they called a snap--a metal container the size of the bottle, and about half or two-thirds of its length--and they'd have a long handle on it, a handle about 3 feet long--and then you laid these metal containers on a bar that had a couple of notches in it and you pushed them in what

you called the "glory hole." Now, the glory hole was a little furnace operated by a jet of gas and it could remelt the top of the bottle, because when the bottle came out of the mold it had no shape. It was just the end of a bottle without any shape. So when the bottles you put in there reached the proper temperature the gaffer, who sat on a bench--he was one of the glass bottle blowers--he pulled this out of the glory hole and he had a tool that he held in his hands that he thrust into this bottle and he rolled it back and forth on the arms of this chair that he sat in and he put a finish on the bottle.

K: You say he rolled it back and forth on the arms of the chair?

S: Yes, the arms of the chair that he was sitting in.

K: Yes.

S: It was kind of a chair-like business and this was called gaffering.

K: Now let me interrupt you for one moment. I'm not quite sure I understand how the finish was acquired on the bottle. Was the bottle itself rolled on the arms of the chair or was the shaft that the bottle was on rolled on...?

S: The shaft that the bottle was on. This permitted this tool to come in on this molten glass, the consistency, we'll say, of putty, and they were able to shape the top of that bottle.

K: Did that require a great deal of skill?

S: Considerable skill, yes. So, then the snap was transferred and the bottle taken out and put in this container where the carrying-in boy could pick it up. So, my job then was snapping-up boy. And you had to go through this process of acquiring certain skills, and then if you worked proficiently and you gained the goodwill of the glass bottle blowers that you worked for, and you gained the goodwill of the foreman of the glass factory, every year a certain number of these boy laborers became indentured apprentices. The number was limited by agreements between the glass bottle blowers union and management, and restricted to a certain percentage.

K: Do you know the reasons behind that restriction?

S: Oh yes, if management had had their way they'd had all apprentices and no glassblowers. And the union, if it had had its way, it wouldn't have had any apprentices except the absolute minimum number required to take care of the demands of the industry--a struggle over economics.

K: So, how did they go about deciding which ones would be apprenticed and which would not?

S: Well, as I said, you were weeded out.

K: But what were the criteria?

S: According to your intelligence, your aptitude, what kind of an

impression you made on the glassblowers you worked for, and what kind of an impression you made on management. Now, if you were absent from your work numerous times that counted against you. If you rebelled at discipline from the boss that counted against you. And if you were careless in your work that counted against you. So, it was a very careful system of grading that you picked out the one with the most aptitude and the one that was most apt to make a good technician and amenable to discipline. So that was how you were chosen and that's how I became an indentured apprentice, because I met these qualifications.

K: And you were how old when you...?

S: Let's see, I think I was 16--past 16 years of age when I became indentured as an apprentice.

K: Now, I'm not exactly sure that I understand what is meant here in this usage of it, by the word "indentured".

S: Well, you signed a contract with the firm that you would work 1040 days at half the journeyman's pay to become a glass bottle blower. Now this led to--I might mention here as an aside--I got my first experience in organized labor when I was about 14 years old. It was very hot weather and very difficult to keep child laborers working, and the glassblowers I worked for encouraged me to conduct a strike to get higher wages so that more boys would come in and go to work.

K: Was there a shortage of boys?

S: Yes, sometimes the shops couldn't operate, they'd have to go home because they couldn't get boy laborers.

K: Before we go any further can you tell me approximately what percentage of the total worker population was comprised of boys?

S: The total population of workers...?

K: At the glass plant, yes. What percentage of the worker population was boys?

S: Well, the three glass plants at one time had over 700 members in the glassblowers union. In addition to that probably an equal number or even a larger number were employed in other work about the plant. So, it was a capital industry for the community.

K: I'm not making myself clear. So, there were about 1400 workers altogether then?

S: Yes.

K: I'd like to know what percentage of them were boys?

S: Oh, probably 25 percent. Anyway--to go on with this strike.

K: Yes, go on with the strike.

S: At noon hour one day we went to the ball diamond to start a baseball game. So, the boss came over when we didn't show up for work at 1:00 and threatened to fire every boy over there. So, nobody paid any attention and he went back to the plant--was gone about an hour--and came back again and he said he was willing to take some of us back. And nobody paid any attention. So, the third time that he came we had our committee ready and we sat down and bargained with him, and we got our wages increased from \$1 a day to \$2 a day with the understanding that he had the privilege of making changes so that one boy could do 2 boys' work. So, we agreed to it and the strike was settled.

So, then they moved the gaffer's chair closer to the bench where the glassblowers worked and the snapping-up boy didn't have to walk very far. In fact, all he did was just turn around. And this enabled 1 boy to do 2 boys' work. That compromise worked out all right and so the boys were making \$2 a day instead of \$1. And I learned how to stand up to the boss and what organized labor meant.

So, later on this 1040 day agreement that we signed, there came periods when the glass factory would be closed down either to a depression or for some other reason, for 4 or 5 months out of the year. A lot of these apprentices that were indentured were put back doing common labor and those days were not counted on the contract. So, some of these boys were working 6, 7 years in order to complete their apprenticeship.

K: When they went back on common labor did their wages increase any?

S: Their wages went back to a common laborer's wages. So, this created dissatisfaction all over the country among the apprentices. I was able, through my connections with the union, to get the addresses of apprentices in all parts of the United States.

K: Now, what is the name of the union we are referring to here?

S: Glass Bottle Blowers of America.

K: That's an AFL union?

S: Yes. And I corresponded with these apprentices and we organized an apprentices union. I was elected president by referendum.

K: What year was that?

S: Probably around 1908. I think that would be about the year. I was sent, then, as a delegate representing the apprentices union to the Glass Bottle Blowers Union to protest against this contract and to ask the union to negotiate a contract that said 1040 days or 5 years. And this contract was negotiated and so that was accomplished by organizing these workers. I was their president and their delegate to the Glass Bottle Blowers Union some years before I became a

member of the union. I take pride in that. It gave me experience in corresponding and organizing and it strengthened my belief in socialism and so forth.

K: To return to this apprenticing system now. You were indentured as an apprentice: were you apprenticed to a single individual glassblower? How did you go about picking up the skill?

S: Well, each one of these apprentices had to start from scratch. He had no one to teach him. The glassblowers gave you an iron pipe like they had and one of the shops--like all the other glassblowers were working at--were turned over to these apprentices. And they learned from scratch how to gather the glass on the end of this pipe, how to bring it out on this marbling stone, and roll it back and forth and blow in it and drop it in a bowl and make a bottle. Some went for six months without being successful in making a single bottle.

K: And you say there was no one there to instruct you?

S: Glassblowers said you had to learn from scratch. Of course, you'd been around them and you'd watched. There wasn't very much that they could show you that you already hadn't seen demonstrated. But it was just a case where you had to learn the nature of glass and learn how to roll it and keep it on that piece of stone and keep it round instead of letting it go flat and all these other intricacies. So, I learned very quickly; I picked up a high degree of skill in the first three or four months. I never had any problem. And I became one of the fastest, one of the best glassblowers in the factory. As a matter of fact, the shop I worked on produced the largest number of bottles in a 9-hour period that had ever been produced in the glass bottle blower's work there at the Baltimore. Our record was exceeded down at the Root plant by the Jensen brothers who later on operated a pool room and another business in Terre Haute.

K: What was the record?

S: Well, our record was 420 dozen bottles in a 9-hour period with 3 men working. And, of course, machines now turn out that many in an hour, but that was considered to rate very high at skill.

K: What year was that?

S: Oh, probably around 1916, '17, somewhere in that period.

K: Now, during that period when you and the others were apprenticed and you were in that apprentice workshop attempting to learn the glassblowing trade, what sort of relationship existed between you and management? What did they expect of you?

S: Well, I was president of my local branch for a year. I was head of the business committee that took care of the grievances at the North Baltimore [Bottle] Glass Company and while I tried to be fair and just and consider both sides inevitably you'd make decisions that

to the management indicated prejudice in favor of the workers. This, I think, didn't build up any anger on the part of management during the time I was functioning. They took it for granted that I would lean over backwards to protect the rights of my union constituents. But when World War I was being fought I refused to have any part in it. I supported the position of the Socialist Party that it was a war to redivide the world markets and the interests of the capitalist class of these various countries, that workingmen would simply be cannon fodder and be shot down supporting a worthless cause. So, I refused to buy war stamps, liberty bonds. I was nominated for Congress on the Socialist ticket in 1918 and I made speeches at factory gates when the federal government was taking notes. If I'd been a more prominent individual I'd have been sent to prison.

K: Now, let me interrupt the interview for one moment here to ask you something about this. It is my understanding that a record of this activity exists elsewhere, that you have both been interviewed about it--about your nomination for Congress--and that you've also written something about it. Is that correct?

S: Oh, yes.

K: And I want to make note of this now in the course of this interview so that other people who do some research into this will know where to find the material.

S: Well, the Indiana Historical Society brought out a bulletin. This bulletin was prepared by a local boy who came in here for several interviews and it is as accurate as any that I think you will find anywhere. So I'll show it to you before you leave.

K: OK, well we won't discuss this then at this point because I don't want to duplicate any work that's already been done. All right, go ahead from there though.

S: Well, anyway, it was customary for the employer to post a bulletin on the bulletin board announcing who would be hired as glass-blowers for the following year and where they would work and who they would work with. This was always left up to management. So, I heard that this bulletin had been posted so I went over and I saw that my name was not on this bulletin so I went to the management and asked them why. And Reuben R. Kramp, who was the superintendent at the time, he said, "Now, I'm not your enemy. I have to do what I'm told I must do." But he said, "The agreement that we have with the Glass Bottle Blowers Union says that we shall hire an employee for a year. At the end of the year, we may terminate his contract without notice and if he is to be re-employed he must sign a new agreement for the following year." He said, "They've decided to impose that feature of the contract and you are not rehired."

So, I said, "Well it must be due to the fact that I'm opposed to the war."

So, he said, "Well, I can't give you any information other than

what I've already given you." So, technically I was not discharged. I was simply not rehired. Now I had stood for industrial unionism as opposed to craft unionism in my local union.

K: What had led you to make that decision? As I understand it that was not a popular stand to be taking in that period of time.

S: Well, we had the glass industry divided into three different unions: we had plate glass, window glass, and we had the....I felt, with Debs, an industrial union was far more effective in getting results than to being split up into craft unions. So, I wanted all the glass industry united under one head with the power to bargain for all the glass industry. This antagonized the leadership of my union so that in that situation I felt that I had no hope of getting any backing from my local union leaders. Now, the local union leaders wanted to call a strike but I advised that because I didn't think it would do any good. I didn't think it would work, just create a lot of hardship. So, I didn't know that I was blacklisted but I went out searching for employment here in Terre Haute. I went to several factories that I knew were hiring but no one would accept my application. So, then I went to Pennsylvania shops.

K: Pennsylvania Railroad Shops?

S: Yes. Now they were hiring so I went to the foreman. He said, "Yes, you come to work day after tomorrow. You go in and have a physical exam and you come to work." So, I went in to see the doctor and the doctor I knew personally and he was a sympathizer with the Socialists. So, he passed me, you know, in getting all ready to OK the paper and then it occurred to him that he'd better check on this blacklist. So, he went back to his desk and pulled out a drawer and sure enough, my name was on the blacklist. So he said, "Sebree, I'm sorry but I'm going to have to say you have hay fever and turn you down." And, he said, "My advice to you is to go out of town until the war ends and things change." And, he said, "You're blacklisted and I doubt if you can get a job here in Terre Haute that will enable you to support your family."

So I decided that was good advice and there was an opening in Danville, Illinois, for glassblowers making fruit jars. So, I went there and hired out and moved my family to Danville and stayed there until the war ended.

K: Now, other than opposition to the war what sort of activities would have gotten a worker on the blacklist in Terre Haute in 1918?

S: Well, we had the Silvershirts organized by William Dudley Pelley.

K: Not in 1918.

S: No, well anyway....

K: Silvershirts came much, much later.

S: Minutemen or so forth. We had this type of organization. We had

Klansmen--that is, a sentiment of Klansmen in the community. And over in Illinois, I believe in Belleville, they wanted a German to kiss the American flag and he refused so they hanged him. And here in Indiana somebody was arrested being unpatriotic and the case was tried and the jury brought in their finding in three minutes. So, this sentiment was building up against slackers and people that were not supporters of the war effort.

K: Was the blacklist entirely a war effort oriented list?

S: A war oriented list.

K: It had nothing to do with any other political beliefs or religious beliefs or labor activities?

S: I think it was also seen by employers as an opportunity to get rid of leaders of organized labor that they didn't want around their plant. And that could have had something to do with it. At any rate, I'm only making my judgment from what happened to me.

K: OK, so you moved to Danville, Illinois, then. Now the purpose of this interview is primarily to learn something about Terre Haute and about your experiences here in Terre Haute in Vigo County so I won't be asking you any questions about Danville, Illinois. But I would like now for you to think back to those years between the time that you arrived in Terre Haute at the age of seven and the time that you left in 1918 and describe for me, if you can, some of the changes that occurred in the community of Terre Haute. Perhaps to describe for me what Terre Haute was like when you arrived here and then discuss some of the important changes that may have occurred, and tell me how it differed when you left from what it was like when you first came.

S: Well, as I say, when I came to Terre Haute we moved in this house at 1414 Maple Avenue. On both sides of the road there were deep ditches and on the north side of the road there was a cinder path that was used as a race course by cyclists. Every weekend they'd have bicycle races. The Hulmans were very much interested in sports activities, and it was a means of advertising businesses of various kinds. Some would furnish you with a high speed bicycle, somebody gave you a shirt to wear that would advertise their business, some wore a cap that carried the publicity and so on. And this was a means of recreation for people who were interested in that type of sport.

Now this 6 mile course went east on Maple Avenue to Fruitridge, turned north on Fruitridge and went to Haythorne Avenue, you turned east and went back to Lafayette, then you came back to the starting point of [Twelve Points]. So that completed a 6 mile course. And this cinder path was maintained for the benefit of these sportsmen. My brother was one of the racers and I don't know who his sponsor was but he was interested in this type of sport.

K: Was there any organized gambling associated with it?

S: Oh there were cock fights, prize fights, you could bet on most anything.

K: Could you bet on the bicycle races?

S: Oh, yes, there was betting on the bicycle races. North of the city a man--I can't think of his name now--but he raised fighting cocks and he conducted cock fights for the benefit of the sportsmen. And there were huge sums of money bet on these cock fights. We had prize fights and....

K: Bare knuckle prize fights?

S: No, they wore gloves but we had several pros or semipros develop here. And we had a gymnasium where people could be trained in that sport.

K: Where was that located?

S: I can't tell you that location. You could probably find it recorded in the newspapers back in those days. Horse racing was a great sport. Axtell and some of the great race horses that made a reputation and were owned by Paul Kuhn and some of these wealthy people of Terre Haute.

Gambling for high stakes was conducted in the upstairs rooms of the Health Office [a saloon] and on one occasion they had a game going on there that lasted all night. And when morning came one of the men that had lost heavily suggested they continue the game at his house. So, the sportsmen went to his home and a few hours later he packed his grip and walked out of the house--penniless. He lost thousands of dollars over this card game.

K: Oh, my. Tell me something about the economic life of the city.

S: Well, the poor were very poor.

K: And you indicated earlier that they were in the vast majority.

S: They were in a vast majority. The house I lived in on Maple Avenue was far superior to the shacks and the hovels that most working people lived in. It's almost impossible for people today to realize the Hoovervilles that accommodated people back in those days. They were made out of piano cases, used car lumber, dry goods boxes. Some were just shells covered with tar paper inside and out, no windows, just a board door that could be closed to keep out the rain. These sheltered whole families. And one of the worst situations existed over across the river in what we referred to as Taylorville.

K: Taylorville?

S: Yes. It had a half-dozen names: Maxville and Talorville and Central Terre Haute and I don't know what all. But there the poorest of the poor lived. If they couldn't find accommodation anywhere else

they could go over there and they could find driftwood and material they could build a shell of a house. They could take the lard cans and cut them up and use them for shingles for roofing. They could cover the sides with heavy cardboard and then cover that over with tar paper. And if the floor was bare earth that didn't bother them, they lived that way.

And the merchants who dealt in fresh foods hauled their refuse over there and dumped it. I was over there several times visiting a friend of mine that through an accident in the wheel works--or wheel company--he had some ribs broken by a spoke that flew out of the machine and he couldn't do his work any longer so they fired him. And he eked out an existence by working a day now and then in a junk yard sorting papers and rags. And he moved his two children and he was living over there. I used to go to visit him to take him food and help him out as I could. And I watched these vans drive over there and dispose of this refuse. When they heard the horses coming the children rushed out and climbed in the vans and they'd hand out frostbitten bananas and cabbage and all the other refuse that had been discarded at the commission houses. And this was the way people lived. They lived on that discarded food for the most part.

Well, my friend had found a 5 gallon jar, you know, a porcelain jar, and he showed me what he was living on in the wintertime. He'd put in a layer of frostbitten bananas and then he'd sprinkle a little sugar over it, another layer of bananas, and he had that jar about half full. And this made a spread for bread and if he could earn enough money to buy a loaf or two of bread then they used that on their bread. And that's the way his children and he survived. And, of course, occasionally they'd get a head of cabbage that part of it could be used. But meat was out of the question, they had no meat. That was a sample of the poverty that existed at that time.

K: How long had that community existed?

S: Oh, it continued on right up through the depression years. Gradual improvement but it was terrible over there even through the last years of the depression right up until the beginning of World War II. It's still a run-down community.

K: What finally put a halt to the conditions you've described for me though?

S: Well, relief agencies, a realization on the part of the establishment that you had to feed these people. That if you didn't they became a more expensive burden in some other manner. It was much cheaper to supply them with a little aid through a charity than it was to take them to the poorhouse and support them out there at tax payers' expense or maybe put them in a hospital and maintain them there for three or four weeks or a month. There are just economic reasons, it wasn't a goodness of heart entirely, I could tell you that. But from an economic standpoint it became apparent to the ruling class that it was cheaper to take care of the needs of people in a more charitable and more humane manner than it was to neglect

them. It is just a dollars and cents decision. The same decision that applies today in taking care of the relief of the poor. You've got to take care of them; you can't let them starve or they'll revolt.

K: Now your family, of course, experienced an entirely different set of conditions as I understand it. You were certainly never as impoverished as the people living across the river. Can you describe for me the way that your family went about acquiring clothing and shelter and food and so forth?

S: Well, to begin with my father, in all the years that I remember him, had only 2 suits of clothes. All the other time he was wearing work clothing, overalls and jumpers or whatever was typical for workers. Only 2 suits of clothes in all the years that I was growing up. I doubt if my mother had over 5 or 6 new dresses in that period of time. We were often given clothing that could be altered and become useful to the family.

It was not so much because we were so poor as it was because we lacked judgment in spending our income. A lot of people were poor and they are poor today because they don't know how to manage their money and we were in that situation. So, only a few times in my life do I ever remember being hungry, and then only for a day or two perhaps, and then there was food on the table again. So, that grinding poverty that so many people had to endure, we escaped that.

K: What were you spending your money on? You indicated there was mismanagement there, what was it going to?

S: My mother was helping people--all her relatives. We had numerous relatives and they would come in to stay a week, 2 weeks, sometimes 2 or 3 months. They would be out of work and when they found employment they would move out but they would never pay us a penny for their board. It was things like that that kept our finances at a very low ebb all the time. And then my mother was inclined to buy things on credit.

K: Well, tell me something about credit. Tell me how credit worked back then at the turn of the century.

S: Well I'll give you an example. In the springtime you would have a housecleaning and that was a very exciting period for a young boy. If you had an ingrain carpet--which we had, we had graduated from rag rugs....

K: I don't even know what an ingrain carpet is.

S: Well, an ingrain carpet is a piece of material like they make gunny sacks out of and it had lurid flowers portrayed all over it, you know, and it was supposed to be artistic and a great improvement over a rag rug. You had to rip the tacks out of it and remove the tacks so your bare feet didn't come in contact with them. You carefully rolled this carpet back and then you carried it out and put it over a clothesline. And then you and the neighbors, every-

body you could get to help, were called over and with a wire carpet beater you beat the dust and dirt out of that piece of carpet. And after it was cleaned the best you could clean it, it was ready to go down again. In the meantime, you removed 4 or 5 inches of straw that had been placed under this carpet and carried it out and burned it. Then you replaced that with more straw, 4 or 5 inches of fresh straw. Then you brought your carpet in and very carefully laid it over the top of this straw, then you tacked it down on 2 sides of the room and then you got a carpet stretcher--which is now an antique and collector's item--and you drove one piece of this carpet stretcher in the floor at the opposite side of the room and then you stretched the carpet as tight as you could and you tacked it down on the other 2 sides of the room.

Now, when that was completed then you were ready to attack the bedbugs and other vermin and that meant that you carried all the furniture out in the first place and had it in the yard while you were getting this carpet down. Kerosene and bedbug powder and roach powder and everything else was used, and finally you got the furniture back in the house.

Well, a year had passed and your curtains were soiled and maybe the rug that you had as a throw rug wasn't quite pleasing so you waited a day or two and a pack peddler would hear about this house-cleaning. So he'd come forward and rap on your door and ask permission to show his merchandise. Well, he carried a grip in either hand, he had another grip in front and one on his back. And he carried everything from pins and needles to throw rugs and curtains and comforters and I don't know what all. He spread his merchandise all over the room--2 or 3 rooms if you had space for it--and then you did your purchasing. And my mother always wound up buying throw rugs or new curtains or something and they were sold on the installment plan. You paid \$1 down and then 25¢ or 50¢ a week until you paid it out.

K: Now, would he come around to pick up the payments every week?

S: Oh, yes, and to sell you new merchandise if he could. In other words he had you as a new customer.

K: What were generally the terms of the credit? What kind of interest rate was being charged?

S: They didn't charge any interest. That was one thing. Usually it was discouraged among pack peddlers. Now, if you borrowed from a bank or some lending institution--a pawn shop, for example--you paid about 15 percent interest. So, very few people that could deal with a pack peddler would go to a pawn shop. And this way they got their new merchandise. Then we had book peddlers and we had magazine salesmen, we had all kinds of people that came to our door and sold stuff on tick. But the worst cheating occurred between the grocer and the people who bought on credit from the grocery store.

K: Who was the grocer? What grocery are we talking about now?

S: Well, I just hate to name individuals but all the grocers that we dealt with at that time gave us a little book and they wrote down the purchases in pencil and the amount purchased and then at the end of the month or week when you paid your bill why they added all this up and totalled it and that's what you owed. Well, it's very easy for the merchant, when he's setting down the cost of one item, to erase part of a 5 and make a 6 out of it or increase the amount. And always, when we paid our bill at the end of the month, our book and his book were out of balance and we owed him from \$3 to \$10 more than we thought we owed. I think this was the typical way of cheating. Of course, short weight and pouring water in the sugar, and there were all kinds of ways [for] the merchant, if he was a little bit crooked, to increase his profit.

K: Why was the grocer not paid with cash?

S: People--most people didn't have cash. They were like the hours of the day, they lived a hand-to-mouth existence, paycheck to paycheck, and they had to have established credit. And as long as they paid, even if they were slow pay, if they eventually paid why they would receive credit.

K: Now how often was your father paid?

S: My father paid once a month because his check came once a month.

K: What sort of things would be bought at the grocery store and what sort of food would the family be able to provide for itself?

S: Well, in the summertime we had a vegetable garden and cabbage and tomatoes and cucumbers and mangoes and things of that sort that we harvested out of our garden, and our grocery bill would drop to some degree. In the wintertime, of course, we had to buy vegetables that had been stored in warehouses and so on. Mostly, we bought meats and canned goods and sugar and coffee and tea, flour. Those were the chief commodities that we bought from the grocery store.

K: Were there any grocery stores in Terre Haute that were thought to be better than the others, perhaps, or were there any that were any larger or any notable...?

S: Oh, yes.

K: Can you tell me about them?

S: Well, the Hoff [F. W. Hoff & Son, 1300 Wabash Avenue] Store that was located at Thirteenth and Wabash Avenue. It had a reputation all over the Wabash Valley as the place where you could buy things you couldn't buy in any other store in the city. They handled paw paws in the fall and persimmons and things that you wouldn't find in any other store in the city. They handled pickled fish of various kinds that you wouldn't....They were German. Then

there was Bresetts, [S. J. Bresett, 1139-1141 Wabash Avenue] that was another well patronized store.

K: Can you spell that--Bresett's.

S: Bresett's [spelled]. They sold by offering cut-rates. They tried to persuade the public that you saved money by trading at their store. Now Hodgkin [Hoff] didn't offer any cut-rates at all, they just offered merchandise that you couldn't buy anyplace else. And Countryman's [Veach & Countryman, 1300 North Eighth] was another storekeeper. They operated at Lafayette and Seventh Street. There was a triangle there and they occupied that triangle. They were a well-known store and handled quality merchandise. Those were some that come to mind.

K: Which one was the biggest?

S: Bresett's probably did the biggest business, Hoff I would say next and then Countryman.

K: OK, just for the sake of comparison can you make your comparison between Bresett's and let's say a normal supermarket today?

S: Well, Bresett's waited on you--they had clerks that waited on you and helped you make your decisions. And the cut prices were arranged somewhat on the plan they use today. They cut the price on 10 items and raise the price on 10 others so that at the end of the day the cash register came out the same. False advertising has been a part of merchandising since merchandising began and so people without scruples behaved then just as they do now. A lie was a white lie if it was told by a merchandiser and it was a dirty black lie if it was told by somebody else. I don't see any change in that situation.

K: How were the groceries gotten home?

S: Well, you carried them on your back in a gunny sack or you had a little wagon. If you had kids usually the child's little wagon was taken down to the grocery store and you trudged home pulling this little wagon with the groceries and maybe the youngest kid sitting in it.

K: Did your family have dairy products delivered to the house?

S: Yes. At one time there were 18 dairies delivering milk and butter and eggs in Terre Haute. And there were 3 went by our house every morning on Maple Avenue. And we would go out with a little milk bucket and we'd get our milk. Sometimes it would be whole milk and sometimes it would be what we referred to as "glimmery." In other words, they had to fill the cans before they started out and if they didn't have enough milk they'd put some water in it and bring it up to required amount to serve their customers. But we took that into consideration and thought nothing about it.

K: What sort of methods did they employ in competition with one another?

S: All right now, before I changed the tape you were about to tell me something about the methods of competition that were used to gain the business.

S: Well, some had larger bells so they'd be more apt to attract attention. Others painted lurid pictures on the sides of their wagon. Some gave out lollipops to the kids--or not lollipops but candy. There were various inducements, you know, to tie you in with this particular dealer.

K: Do you remember any in particular that might have been more effective than others?

S: Oh, I can't--sometimes the stores would have a contest and you would win a basket of groceries or something. It was not the high pressure advertising that prevails today. They operated on low key.

K: Well, can you tell me something about the methods and modes of transportation here in Terre Haute when you were a boy?

S: Well, when I came to Terre Haute they still had some horse cars and they'd bring them out on Sunday for people to ride in. The horse cars had been replaced maybe 5 years before I arrived on the scene. Around 1891 or '92 they introduced electric cars and part of these electric cars were open air cars and the rest were enclosed. They had one sight-seeing car that they operated on Sundays. You could buy a ticket and go up on top and maybe have your hat knocked off by the limbs of some trees when you went underneath it.

K: What were the most popular sights to see on a Sunday when you went off on one of these?

S: [laughter] Well Ft. Harrison was an attraction. It's located at the end of Maple Avenue on the river. That's where the old fort was built and they erected a tavern there later on and so people would go there to drink. And sometimes they would have boat races. They had some passenger boats on the Wabash and that was one of their stops on their way to Clinton and back. So, quite a few people went to this particular recreation area on Sundays. And Collett Park was also a popular place.

K: Collett Park did you say?

S: Yes, it's located on the north side of Maple Avenue from Seventh Street over to Ninth and then north a couple of blocks. OK. Later on the fairground was patronized quite a bit. It was used for racing horses but it also became a popular playground for people and on one occasion they got 2 old dilapidated engines, they built a half-mile of track on the north side of the fairgrounds and they had a head-on collision.

K: Did you see that?

S: I saw it, yes. And then the circus came to town and the wild west shows, baseball was an attraction. They had a half-a-dozen diamonds scattered around over the city for amateurs and then they had the....

K: Were there a lot of amateur teams?

S: Oh yes, it was a very popular sport. Then we had the baseball park itself located on the south side of Wabash Avenue and east of Fruitridge. And swimming was also....

K: Any particular fads that you can recall from that period?

S: I don't think I can recall any particular fads. The Terre Haute House had poolroom, billiard room, bar and it was a hangout for the sporting element and people that liked to associate with the sporting element. And so they had a long line of chairs setting out in front of the Terre Haute House on Wabash Avenue. In the evening these chairs would be occupied and here and there someone would be using a silvered toothpick or some other device indicating that he had dined at the Terre Haute House. These spectators watched the women get on and off the streetcars and spent their time making comments about their dresses and their hats and sex appeal and so on. Over on the south side of Wabash where the bank stands--the south-east corner--there's where a lot of people congregated waiting for streetcars and they'd engage in conversation and they'd become so occupied with their conversing that they'd let one car after another go past and pay no attention to it.

And most all chewed tobacco. And that sidewalk was so slippery with tobacco spit that many people fell. It was especially embarrassing to women who wore long skirts because when they tried to get up on that section of sidewalk they had to be very careful that their skirts didn't sweep in that mess of spit. It finally got so obnoxious to the community that the City Council passed a law fining people who spit on the sidewalk. And this raised a great deal of protest from the tobacco spitters. They thought that was depriving them of one of their inalienable rights. But 2 or 3 arrests and fines and they decided that cigarette smoking made them look just as manly and so many of them quit the chewing habit.

K: Did you and your family ever discuss politics at dinner or perhaps on Sundays?

S: We discussed politics all the time.

K: Good. Because if you did then perhaps you can tell me something about local politics in the period between the turn of the century and 1918 when you left. What were the chief topics of discussion in a local sense?

S: From the time the industrial boom began here at the turn of the century we had the rottenest politics as anywhere outside of Chicago.

K: In what way?

S: Well, they were corrupt. They were susceptible to bribes. They put their own people on payrolls and paid them when they didn't work. They did all kinds of things that indicated rascality. Now, prior to that I don't know whether there was a better class of people or not. All I know is what I observed after I came to Terre Haute and what I heard other people talk about. Well, the climax was reached when Donn Roberts became mayor. Now, Donn Roberts was a genius. He was a graduate of Rose Polytechnic, he had a high I.Q.--135 or something like that--a genius. His father was a doctor and not a very high type of person. And probably Donald [Donn] grew up with the idea that anything was fair in love and war and politics. So, the first thing he did he became a contractor and he paved Fruitridge Avenue and a half dozen other streets.

K: This would have been about what period?

S: Well, this would have been the early 1900s. A very poor quality of work. In other words, he cheated all he could. His father built a lot of houses in an abandoned gravel pit and they called it Roberts-town. Everytime the water came out of the river bottoms it overflowed and it's halfway to the tops of these houses. But the doctor had built them cheap and he got high rentals so when the water went down the people moved back in, cleaned the mess up and went on paying their rent. Now, when Donn was elected, in order to be sure of winning the election, he had his henchmen copy names off the tombstones out here at Highland Lawn Cemetery and Roselawn Cemetery. He had a parrot registered to vote and I don't know how many other ways that he had people registered.

K: How did all this come to be known?

S: He was arrested and charged with malfeasance in office and this was all brought out at the trial. At any rate, on election day, why, all these imaginary people were voted. One fellow testified at the trial that he voted 7 times and he changed his coat 3 times in one precinct and then went over in another precinct and did the same thing and he voted 7 different names in the election. So the Republicans were able to start an investigation and Donn was brought to trial and all these facts were brought out. He was sentenced to prison and Jim [James M.] Gossom--I told you about working at the feed mill--or maybe I didn't?

K: I don't think you did.

S: No. Well, I worked at this feed mill up on Maple Avenue and Jim [James M. Gossom] was the boss--and while I'm on the subject, you might be interested....

K: Sure.

S: Then we'll go back to Donn Roberts.

K: OK.

S: My brother was night watchman at this feed mill.

K: Again, can you tell me what year?

S: Well again, this would be--I was probably 13--no, 12 years of age.

K: OK, 1902 or so then.

S: The elevator shelled the corn and then they sent the cobs down to this Indiana Milling Company [1601-1625 Maple Avenue]. They ground the cobs, added some salt and molasses and sold them to the farmers for cow feed. So, my brother got me a job working there watching the shakers. Now, the cobs, as they were ground up, they were passed over shakers. This separated the fine particles from the coarse, the coarse were returned and reground and the process repeated until they got it down fine enough to go into the cow feed. So, my duty as an employee was to watch these shakers, keep the belts tight and oil the machinery and see that nothing went wrong and dispose of the shucks and particles that wouldn't pass through these shakers. So, I got \$2 a day for that but I worked 12 hours. Now, one of the jobs I had was to get on a ladder and oil the bearings on the shafting. The shafting on each floor ran the entire length of the building, about 150 feet. Now, this shaft was held together by collars and set screws.

K: What was it driven by?

S: It was driven by steam engine down on the lower floor. All the machinery was operated from the steam engine on the ground floor. Now I got up to oil the machine where the shafting would be--I just had an undershirt and top shirt on--and one of these set screws caught the sleeve of my shirt. Fortunately it was the left sleeve and I got my arm braced against the post and that started turning and tearing and that tore the shirt right off my body. Now, if I hadn't had anything to brace against it would have wound me around that shaft but I had the good fortune to escape injury. And the only embarrassing feature was that shortly after this happened they had a telephone call for me to go in the office to answer the telephone and I was very embarrassed to go in and face the girls in the room there who were bookkeeping and taking care of the records.

But later on, a week or two after that, I fell asleep setting in one of these four-story windows. It was almost impossible to stay awake working 12 hours. Now this window ledge was broad but I could easily have toppled out. But I was yanked out of that window by this man [James M.] Gossom who was later to become mayor [1915] of Terre Haute. And he said, "You go on home and do your sleeping at home, you're letting this whole damn plant burn down." The feed had caught on fire and it was going all over the plant, you know. So that terminated my employment there. Now back to Gossom--he was the man that pulled me out of the window.

K: Was he active in local politics at that time?

S: Yes, he was in local politics.

K: Was he a Republican or a Democrat?

S: Well, I'll tell you what his function was. On election day, all the moving vans in the city were brought up to this Indiana Milling Company plant and they put in a case of whiskey and 2 or 3 kegs of beer and then the vans were loaded with mostly foreign-born workers who couldn't even speak English. They were the ones that were registered from tombstones out here in the cemetery. And Donn supervised the route of the vans and saw to it that they were properly voted. But he [Gosson] escaped prosecution but Donn was sent to prison.

K: So, he was a Democrat then.

S: Yes. Well, the Republicans were just as guilty but they didn't get caught.

K: Which party was greater in relative strength during that period here in Terre Haute?

S: Well, after Donn's arrest and imprisonment the Republicans took over and for quite a number of years they ruled the roost.

K: Was there any noticeable change in the administration of the city?

S: Oh, so far as the grafting went on there was little change, it was just more concealed. I'll give you an example. One of the politicians who was elected [1926] Republican chairman of the county, he operated a music store.

K: Who would that have been?

S: His name was John Jensen. Well Jensen went down on Second Street among the prostitutes and forced them to buy a player piano and sold it to them 3 or 4 times the normal price.

K: How did he force them to do it?

S: Well, by the threat of closing up their business. They had to pay tribute to operate and this was an indirect way to finance the Republican campaign. And so the money that came in, the payment on those player pianos, went into the Republican slush fund to elect other Republicans. Now, this went on for several years until the Democrats took over and I suppose they continued to collect the tribute but by some other means.

K: Did your family have any particular persuasion one way or the other toward the Democrats or Republicans?

S: Well my father, as long as Debs was a candidate for office, he voted for Debs.

K: Debs was never a candidate for local office was he?

S: No, he was a candidate for Congress but my father died before Debs was nominated for Congress. But because the Republican party played such a role in the Civil War my father would have been a Republican if he hadn't become a Socialist. So, probably for some local candidates he may have voted the Republican ticket--may have scratched his ticket. But as long as Debs was living and a candidate and my father was living he voted Socialist.

K: Do you recall any women's suffrage movement here in Terre Haute for that period?

S: There were any number of women interested in women's suffrage. The function was in the Socialist party, but Debs, before the turn of the century, brought Susan B. Anthony here and marched with her down Wabash Avenue and they met with catcalls and people spit at them from the sidewalks and subjected them to very serious harassment. So Debs long, long ago committed himself to women's suffrage and the suffrage movement was known in Terre Haute.

K: Were there any local people who were advocates of it? Can you remember?

S: I don't think it was a separate organization but from time to time women's suffrage would be brought to the attention of the public through Socialist meetings, speakers, literature and so forth.

K: You mentioned the role of the moving vans in the electoral process here which reminds me that I believe your family moved a great deal when you were a young boy. I've been told that you moved a lot in Terre Haute. Can you tell me something about that? Describe the process that a family had to go through in order to move back then. Perhaps tell me why you did so much moving.

S: Well, I counted 19 different houses that we lived in while I was growing up. Now, there may have been others that escape my memory.

K: What was the reason for so many moves?

S: Well people moved for various reasons. Many people would fall behind with their rent payment and the landlord--it was frowned upon to force people out in midwinter--so he'd let the rent ride until spring and then if you didn't pay your back rent, why, he'd force an eviction. Now, that caused a great many people to move. Then most of the rental property was in a poor state of repair--leaky roof or defective chimney or rat infested basement--there were all kinds of reasons why people would become dissatisfied with a house after they'd lived in it a while and so they would move to what they regarded as a better house.

And then there were others who would move to get nearer to their work. If they changed jobs and they had to walk 2 miles instead of 2 blocks or 3 they'd try to locate closer to their new job. So that caused moving. And then there were other people who got promoted on their job. Their earning power would increase by 30, 40, 50 per-

cent, and so with more money in the house they were living they became dissatisfied and they wanted to move into a more elite neighborhood. So, they'd move out of that neighborhood into one that had a little better housing accommodations. So, all these reasons. Now, my mother was raised as a pioneer family and the pioneers moved for no reason except they wanted to go someplace. So, I think most of our moves resulted from this pioneer spirit. My mother would just be unhappy with the house she lived in and when she'd go to walk around the neighborhood somewhere she'd see a house that looked more attractive and so we'd move.

K: How did you go about actually physically moving then? Can you describe for me the moving vans?

S: Well around the courthouse--there was one area south of the courthouse that was given over to people who grew vegetables and fruit--it was a market. On the east side of the courthouse and on the north side of the courthouse that was taken over by moving vans and wagons that would haul baggage and things of that sort. So if you wanted to move you....

K: Now, was this just a parking area that we're talking about or were there sheds and garages and so forth?

S: Well, on the north side of Nabash Avenue, north of the courthouse, that was also given over to vans. If you wanted to move you went down and bargained with one of these moving van owners and he would come and get your furniture and move it.

K: There were no flat rates then?

S: No, you dealt with the one that would offer you the best terms. And usually moving was a communal activity. When people knew you were moving they wanted to come in and help so there would be 20 people loading the moving van and there would be 20 people unloading it when it arrived at the new home. This is one way that we became acquainted--kept up a community spirit--and it bred informality and friendship. It was a very good thing for the community.

K: Well, was there a particularly good time of the year for moving? Was any season to be preferred over another?

S: Well, the spring, of course, housecleaning time was the time when most people did their moving. I'd say from May through July was the principal months in the year when people moved. Of course, there were people coming into the community and people leaving and exceptional cases so even in the most severe weather of winter occasionally there would be a moving van transporting somebody's goods to some location.

K: Can you make a comparison between the amount of moves in that period as opposed to the amount of movement going on around you now in Terre Haute? Were people more active then than they are now?

S: No, I think people move far less frequently today than they did then. Now I can't say that for the class of people that occupy rooming houses because they are moving all the time, mostly for the same reasons that people moved back in the early days. They fall behind with their rent and the landlord evicts them. Or they change their occupation and they have to move to get closer to their work. A great many people who occupy a rooming house don't own an automobile and would depend upon walking to and from employment or catching a bus. And so that compels them to make changes that they wouldn't make if they were receiving an income sufficient to provide them with a car.

K: Did your family ever consider buying a house?

S: Once in a while my father would be intrigued by the idea and then he would consider all the problems connected with owning property and maintaining it, paying taxes, and the deterioration of the property itself. He would magnify it to the point he'd say it was about "even Steven" whether you rented or whether you owned. And so we never bought a piece of property while I was growing up.

K: I take it then that it was a matter of preference rather than a matter of economics. You had the financial wherewithal to....

S: Oh they sold property on contracts. We could have bought a house, nothing down and so much a month, you know, as they do today. So people could buy houses back in those days; it was a matter of choice.

K: Can you describe for me now the cultural life of Terre Haute in that period?

S: Well, at that time the church played an important role in community life. A great many people stayed away from church and they were usually people who would bide their time watching a sport or participating in some sports activity.

K: And would there be sports on Sunday mornings then?

S: Oh yes. There was a great deal of family visiting. Generally a family would locate in some particular town or city and in the case of my people my aunts and uncles all located here in Terre Haute so there was no problem to visit. All you had to do....

K: Can you take it up a little bit before where you were?

S: Well, frequently we would visit my grandmother and the children loved to hear her stories because, being a pioneer, she could tell amazing stories about the Indians and the desperadoes and witch stories and all kinds of stories that intrigued the minds of children. And she always kept candy and we never failed to get a piece of candy when we paid her a visit. So, we were all very much in love with her and enjoyed every minute in her society that we could spend.

K: In talking about cultural activity here, I'm wondering whether or not there was anything distinctively Terre Hautean that we might mention.

S: Well we had lectures, we had musicals, we had displays of art objects. We didn't have the Swope Gallery or anyplace like that but the library provided display space after the Emeline Fairbanks Library was built. One of Janet Scudder's statues [the Wood Nymph] was placed there. And we even had some display of art in the public buildings. In the Terre Haute Historical Museum we have a statue that was on top of a bank building here. And it's a nude statue and when it was erected some ladies in the community organized a protesting group and they waited on the banker and they said, "You must take that statue off the building, it will corrupt the morals of the community."

And the banker said, "Well let's go out ladies and see what you're talking about." So, he took them outside and they were looking up there and you couldn't see the sex organs without power glasses, you know. And he said, "Now, if you ladies would just walk down the street and not look up I'm sure that wouldn't offend you." And it remained up there for a good many years. But we had these pressure groups. We had cultural activities but we also had the prudes and the Puritans and the people who were very fearful that the corset would go out of style, and the padded breasts and the raised up behinds and all these other things that were typical of women's wear.

K: Can you offer any comments on the quality of the local newspaper at that time?

S: Well, they were pretty good. They carried the news and they carried it in such a way that opposing newspapers shaded their account of the news in such a way that you could pick up support for your own prejudice which is typical of newspapers today. I don't think that in that respect they've changed very much. You could always find a supporting view for your own prejudice.

K: Were they divided according to political party affiliations?

S: Yes, they were divided into Republican and Democrat. The country was always going to hell when the Republicans were in power and vice versa.

K: We are working now on the sixth half hour of this interview and I intend to end this session today with the end of this tape. I wanted to ask you a few questions about your return to Terre Haute but before we get into that is there anything else that you think we ought to have on the tape about that period in your life between the turn of the century and the time that you were forced to leave Terre Haute in 1918? Can you recall anything that we ought to know either about your life or about Terre Haute?

S: I can't think of anything of great importance except when Eugene Debs ran for Congress in 1916. And because of my activities in the union and my acquaintance with union men and so forth I was on the campaign committee that conducted the canvas for votes. So it was during this period that I had an opportunity to become better acquainted with Debs. A young man had recently purchased a Ford automobile. His name was Murray DeBaum and he offered the use of this automobile and offered to be a chauffeur to take Debs around over the territory. I, during this period, did some of the Jimmy Higgins work, posting bills and distributing literature and accompanying Debs to these different locations where he spoke. And so in this automobile I had a chance to converse with him and discover more about his attitude, his goals in life, and some of the hardships he experienced as an organizer of labor, and some of the disappointments of his life as a leader of the Socialist cause. So, I'm very thankful that I had this opportunity to take part in that campaign.

K: When he spoke of some of the disappointments in his life, can you remember any of those? Particularly any of those that may have applied to Terre Haute or to Indiana.

S: As I recall he didn't say anything that I remember about happenings in Terre Haute but he was naturally alarmed about the labor situation, the war being fought in Europe, and the inevitability that the United States would become involved. And his feelings that it was just fruitless sacrifice of human life to conduct this type of struggle to regain or to apportion foreign markets for the exploitation of the rotten ruling class in these different countries. So it became clear that his dedication would lead him to prison if necessary. Already he could see the clouds moving that would send many people to prison. So, naturally this would discourage him and the slow acceptance on the part of organized labor, the class struggle philosophy and becoming the tail of the Democratic political party and things of that sort.

K: Did Debs feel that he personally had had any effect on the condition of organized labor in Terre Haute?

S: Oh, he organized, in the early days, many of the local unions. He organized the streetcar workers, he organized many, many unions here in Terre Haute.

K: Now you were talking about the fact that, of course, Debs had himself organized a number of unions here in Terre Haute. I'm aware of that.

S: In one of his articles he tells how he became a socialist. You'll find that in Jean [Y.] Tussey's book Eugene V. Debs Speaks, in which he enumerates a number of unions that he organized here in Terre Haute in the early days of unionism.

K: My question was, I'm interested in whether or not he was satisfied with the course of developments in organized labor here in Terre Haute in that period. Was he pleased with the way things

were going?

S: Well, naturally a socialist would like to see socialism become the law of the land as quickly as possible. But he had the understanding that it would be a slow process of evolution, it wouldn't come today, it wouldn't come tomorrow, not next week or next year. But he said, "If you believe in socialism the next best thing is to work to see that it comes about," and so that meant a world of patience. So I don't think he was laboring under any disillusion when he spoke optimistically of the future. He felt that time could be measured in eons or it could be measured in seconds and the inevitability of socialism he believed was uncontested, that it would come in spite of all opposition. So that gave him an abiding faith in the future.

K: So he was not discouraged then by the course of organized labor?

S: He was discouraged to the point where he felt that it was desirable to find a new leadership, more class conscious [ness] and instead of forming alliances through the civic federation and collaborate with the ruling class, that such leadership was a disgrace to the labor movement. It should be replaced by more class conscious leadership.

K: Did he personally make any effort to effect such a change here in Terre Haute?

S: Oh, yes, he did it all the time.

K: Can you describe for me some of the things he may have done here in Terre Haute along those lines?

S: One of the leading labor leaders here in Terre Haute and one of the closest people to Debs was Phil K. Reinbold. He was a cigar maker, and he was a personal friend of Debs. He was president for a number of years of the Central Labor Union here in Terre Haute and he worked constantly with Debs to spread the philosophy of socialism within the local labor movement. And at that time we had a great many members in the coal miners union, the glassblowers union, quarry workers union; I could go on and on and name them. It seemed that if it hadn't been for the outbreak of World War I that socialism was well on its way to changing the whole labor setup and bringing more progressive elements into leadership. But the war, of course, set back.

K: How did the war set it back? What effect did the war have on it?

S: Well, it enabled the more reactionary elements to denounce the socialists as traitors and slackers and so forth and increase their power and put the socialists on the defensive. So, this attitude continued all through the period of McCarthyism and right on up until the present day. And the leadership of organized labor is still backward. It still must go a long ways before it can become effective in leading organized labor into a better way of life.

K: Well when I had interrupted you you were telling me something about Debs' relations with a labor union leader here in Terre Haute.

S: Well his relationship with local unions....

K: No, with a labor union leader. I can't recall the name of the man, you just gave it to me--a close friend of Debs--and you were going to tell me something that Debs had just, I believe, done. Perhaps I misunderstood. Go ahead.

S: Through the influence of Phil Reinbold, Debs was able to exercise power and influence within the local labor movement.

K: I see. Can you tell me some of the things that he was able to do? When you say he was able to exercise power and influence, what do you mean by that? Can you give me some examples of what you are talking about?

S: Well, in every laboring community the elite class is opposed to unions. They may give lip service and say, "Well, we recognize the unions and we'd rather deal with organized labor than to deal with individuals," but this is meaningless when it actually comes to dealing with organized labor. Debs worked to strengthen labor unions to begin with. He also worked to make the labor member class conscious, to realize that he represented a particular class of individuals. That the employing class represented an opposite group of individuals and that there was a conflict of interests. Now, he would go along and agree that the interests were identical to the point where the product was in a finished state. But once that product reached that stage of development and was to go up on the market and sold for a certain price, then their class struggle developed as to who would get what in dividing this money that was received for the product. The more the capitalists got, the less the worker would get. The more the worker would get the less the capitalists would get. And in this class struggle came all of the ills of government, that this wealthy class was able to control legislatures, able to control judges, able to control presidents. They were able to pass legislation that would benefit them and be a detriment to organized labor through their control over legislation, through the interpretation of laws by the courts and so forth. And so Debs tried to make this plain to the workers and let them see what the class struggle really meant, what class rule meant. And he wanted them to see it politically. They must have a party organized by the working class, for the benefit of the working class, and supported by the working class, before any fundamental change in society could be brought about.

K: During that period did the Socialist Party ever make an effort to get into the local politics in Terre Haute or in Vigo County?

S: We ran candidates in every election. From the time I joined the party I was on the ticket running for some office. So, we never let an election go by that we didn't participate in it. Now, we had no illusions about the electoral process, we knew it was a farce. But we knew that to bring about political change the working class must

become familiar with the political apparatus that is used in the social structure to maintain our present form of government. And to hope to organize a party that has no training, no understanding of the political process, would be meaningless to the working class and doomed to failure. It's only by participating in the primaries, by learning how to get out the vote, by learning how to register people and so on, that any political party can effectively express itself in the political process.

K: Can you recall any particularly instructive experiences that either you or the Socialist Party had here in Terre Haute during that period? Did anything happen that made a particular impression upon you and that may have changed the way that you went about doing things later on?

S: We had a judge here in Terre Haute that was very unpopular with organized labor.

K: And this would be about what time?

S: About 1913, '14.

K: Can you give me his name?

S: I can't give you his name now, it slipped my mind. But Stephen [M.] Reynolds, who was an attorney--he had come here to invest his and his wife's money in oil and real estate--and after he met Eugene Debs he became a convert to socialism. And so he was very open and condemning of rich people that prayed for people on Sunday and then preyed off of them the rest of the week. And he was especially irate about the people that owned houses of prostitution and saloons and were pillars of the local churches, so his business was ostracized. His income was sufficient so he didn't worry about it, so he began teaching anybody that wanted to go--especially children of the working class--teaching them to read and to write and to learn. And I was one of the early students in his class.

Now, we had a Socialist meeting in the courtroom of this judge on a Sunday and the judge had made some kind of a decision. He had given an unusually stiff penalty for some minor offense and Reynolds was very indignant. He couldn't see that the sentence was justified by the degree of the crime. So, he denounced the judge and in very severe language. So the next day the judge put him in jail for contempt of court. Well, that aroused the whole community. And that was one occasion where a confrontation with the structure of the ruling class was brought out in the open.

Now, on another occasion it was a very severe winter and people were out of work and they were moving from one town to another trying to find a job. And when they'd come to Terre Haute, to keep from freezing, they'd apply at police headquarters for a night's lodging.

K: Would the police put them up in the jailhouse then?

S: Yes, the police would put them in the jail and the next day they'd go before the police court and be sent to the penal farm for 3 months or 6 months. We discovered that quite a number of union men had been 'treated that way. So I was put on a committee to wait upon the judge.

K: Excuse me a second. For what crime were they sentenced when they were...?

S: Vagrancy. They had no place to sleep.

K: There was a 3 month imprisonment for that in Terre Haute at that time?

S: Three to 6 months and they were sent to the penal farm. So I met the judge, his name was [R. Voorhees] Newton. A very ignorant judge, he should have been dogcatcher. That would have been a much more suitable office. But we went into this judge's court--this committee --and we sat there through a session of his court. Now, what aroused our indignation most--there was 2 young prostitutes--streetwalkers--brought before him. Whatever the culprit that appeared before him--before he sentenced him--he would give him a 15 or 20 minute lecture upon his bad behavior, his sins and immorality and so on and then he'd sentence him.

So in the case of these prostitutes the police testified that they'd entrapped them walking down the street the night before and the judge started in to demean them. And if ever I heard 2 young people brow-beat, it was in that court room. He said, "You're lower than the prostitutes on Second Street. You're plying your trade without a license. You're scabbing on the whores that are operating with a license on Second Street," and on and on and on for 30 minutes. And then finally he sentenced them to the house of correction or some-place. They were young girls. Well, our committee was so outraged by what we had witnessed.

K: Now what was your committee?

S: A committee from the Central Labor Union.

K: And you regularly witnessed this sort of thing? You sent a committee down...?

S: No, we just witnessed on this occasion because we were there to see why the judge was sentencing our members as vagrants when they came to seek a night's lodging. So, we went back in the judge's chambers and we talked with him. And I was so outraged that I didn't bridle my tongue; I told him exactly what I thought of him. And he was going to throw me in jail for contempt of court for talking to him that way. Well, he didn't do it. At any rate, it stopped that cycle of arrests and penal farm. And so I reported to Central Labor Council and aroused the indignation of the whole body of workers there in the Wabash Valley and so they signed petitions and when the election came around they voted him out of office.

So, again, it was a confrontation with the court and I think that is the only way you can express your power as working people is with your feet, with your pen--writing and signing petitions. It's these physical acts. Not by voting, that's a waste of time. That's why more than 55 percent of the electorate stay away from the polis, they know that it's a waste of time. But the demonstrations that march on Washington, the demonstrations that march on Indianapolis to protest a social wrong, those are the people who exercise power. Those are the people who will be listened to. And to set fire to a community as occurred in Miami or Watts or Chicago, that kind of protest that may be considered irrational but it's the kind of protest that gets some kind of a result. Not the political process. Here we are faced with voting for Carter or Reagan. You might as well vote for a banty rooster against the cock fighter. There is absolutely no difference in them, their philosophy is the same. They're both stupid men and yet they rule over a nation of 220 million people.

K: Now, you left Terre Haute in 1918--you've already told me that--and went to Danville, Illinois. When did you then return to Terre Haute?

S: I returned about 1923.

K: And what influenced your decision to come back?

S: Well, when I went to Chicago I found employment in the Golden Rule Cutlery Company. They manufactured pocket knives and during the war they manufactured knives sold from punchboards. Each one of these knives had a piece of Celluloid covering a nude or seminude female. And the soldiers and everybody else bought knives off these punchboards. So this business had grown rapidly and when I went to work for them--it was common labor and roustabout--and I was moved from one part of the plant to another and learned many new skills. The place was nonunion.

I discovered they wanted to organize. So several people worked out the idea of taking a round piece of white paper and everyone who signed his name there was no way of telling who was the first signer because the names were at random and there was no way to tell. So this petition was signed and we demanded a union recognition and we demanded pay. And the foreman and everybody else signed it except the office help.

K: Were they invited to sign it?

S: They were invited but they were elite, they stayed out. They wanted nothing to do with the hired hands. So, our request was granted immediately. Then the office force, seeing that we got a raise in pay, they wanted to do the same thing. And when they made their demands on the boss he said, "Yes, I'll give you my answer Monday." And this was on Friday. On Monday when they came to work, they were locked out. They had a new crew of office help in there.

So, one of the people in the office had worked for this man, Holsinger, from the time he had started his business. One of his employees knew that the owner of the plant kept 2 sets of books, one for his own information and the other for the government. So, in her anger she rushed over to the Federal Building and reported the fact. So, the books were seized and to escape the penitentiary he had to sacrifice all of his interest in the plant, his \$40,000 or \$50,000 house out in the edge of Chicago, his automobile. They took everything from him, left him penniless.

So, then the bank, to protect their interest, they put a man in charge whose name was Codfell. I afterwards learned that in German this means calf head. But he was anything but a calf head, he was a very smart person. Now, his brother worked for the American Brass Company and during the wartime it was difficult to get supplies for the pocket knives so they'd have to order from a half-a-dozen different sources to be sure to get supplies. The result was that after the war ended these supplies kept pouring in and they were contracted and obligated to pay for them. So, the storage bins were full of all kinds of valuable material: German silver, brass, Celluloid, steel, everything.

This brother of Mr. Codfell's, that worked for the American Brass Company, began to sell this material out of his plant supposedly from the American Brass Company. In reality, it was taken out of this plant where he was superintendent, put in there by a trusting banker. So, one Sunday I went over and I discovered a great semitrailer there being loaded with this material and typewriters and recording machines and everything else and I realized that I might become involved in this theft. I had no sympathy with the banker. I didn't give a damn if they lost every penny they had invested so I didn't report it. But I decided that I would get away from the plant and not become involved in any prosecution for theft. And so I handed in my resignation and much against the desire on the part of the manager, why, he had to accept it and I moved back to Terre Haute.

K: Were you able to get a job here in Terre Haute when you returned?

S: Yes, the foreman that operated the plant in Chicago had come here to Terre Haute and established a nice shop here in Terre Haute. So when I returned I began working for them as a foreman over one of the departments.

K: Now had the blacklist, that was initially responsible for your leaving Terre Haute, been continued after the war?

S: Oh, no, probably 2 or 3 years after the war ended, why, that blacklist ended also.

K: And what year did you return?

S: Nineteen twenty-three or four.

K: Was there anything noticeably different about the community of

Terre Haute in 1924 from the way that it had been in 1918 when you left?

S: Well, most people had employment. They were enjoying "Coolidge prosperity" and apparently they were bent upon pleasures. They went to the auto races at the park north of here, north of Parke County, [and] the Indianapolis races. Wherever they could find excitement, why, they preferred excitement to thinking about social problems.

K: Now, I gained the impression that the town was more prosperous when you returned than it had been when you left.

S: Oh, yes.

K: Had there been any changes in the economic base of the community that you can describe for me?

S: Yes, the coal mines had begun to fold up. The glass factories were--prohibition had caused them to close. There were quite a few economic changes that affected the community.

K: I'm familiar with some of these and that's why I'm asking you about it. Because it seems to me that the ones that I'm familiar with were all changes for the worse and I'm curious as to what the basis for this prosperity in the middle 1920s was when you returned?

S: There were 15,000 coal miners living in Terre Haute at one time. And they had begun to go down the drain due to the fact that [there was] less demand for coal and coal consumption had shifted to Kentucky and Tennessee and other states because it was low sulphur coal. This all had a depressing affect. Then the glass factories closing down robbed the community of a lot of money. One of the breweries folded up, one of the distilleries, so there was a lot of the factories closed down. Now a lot of people think that this was very devastating to the community. I'm not of that attitude because as these industries folded other industries moved into the community and replaced the workers. And for the most part they were diversified, much more diversified than the industries that folded up.

K: Can you give me some examples?

S: Well, Columbia Records moved in.

K: But not in the 1920s.

S: No.

K: I'm talking about this period when you returned and the coal mines had....

S: There were quite a few, I'm not able to recall which ones now but I know that the city itself lost 4 or 5 thousand people during that period. Now, if it hadn't been for other industries coming in here to take up the slack, with all the miners and glassblowers and all

these other people going out, it would have shown a much more substantial loss. But I'm very thankful we have such a diversified type of industry here.

K: Was your father still alive at that time?

S: My father died in 1914.

K: Did he leave a pension?

S: No, he had two policies--\$1,000 each--that he left. One was in the Brotherhood of Trainmen and the other in the Brotherhood of Switchmen. However, with his illness these policies were used at the grocery store and for burial expense and so on, so his estate that finally fell into my mother's and my possession didn't amount to a whole lot. I think about \$800, \$900, something like that. And my mother survived my father by several years and the last years of her life I took care of her. She was very feeble and required nursing care and my wife and I provided it.

K: Now, I understand that when you came back you were employed by the knife manufacturing concern once again.

S: Yes.

K: In what capacity?

S: I had charge of the buffing department. Now, the buffing consisted of polishing the blades, polishing the handles, and getting the knife all ready to be wiped clean and put in the shipping cases. I had about 15, 20 people working under me at maximum production.

K: Were you making as much money at that as you had been making blowing glass?

S: Well, my earning power was about \$75 a week. I would say that was comparable to what I'd been making as a glassblower.

K: But your new position didn't require any skill of the magnitude of glassblowing did it?

S: Well, it required skill because I was a working foreman. I had to work and supervise the work of the others at the same time and it required skill but not to the same degree that blowing glass did.

K: Was the work force organized?

S: No, they were nonunion.

K: Did you make any efforts to organize them?

S: No, at that time I thought it would be useless because each department was working on a kind of a piece rate system or a bonus system. If you produced more than a certain number of finished

knives, you received a bonus so the wages in the knife shop were, I would say, above average union wages throughout. So, there wasn't the same necessity or pressure to organize that I found in Chicago.

K: Had sympathy for Socialism declined any in Terre Haute during the time that you had been gone?

S: Yes, a very low ebb. It declined all over the nation. After Debs' death in 1926 the Socialist Party membership began to go down very rapidly and it finally reached a point where its influence was very, very limited. Norman Thomas kept it alive. It had no influence in the American political scene from then on.

K: Was there any effort locally to revive it?

S: Well, during the depression years radicalism began to take root in Terre Haute again because of the depression. The Communist Party organized a Local here and the Socialist Party had built up a membership of 15 or 20 members of the Socialist Party. And they worked as one unit, there was no antagonism between the 2 groups. They met frequently and made decisions that committed both groups to certain actions. So that situation existed until--well, the back of the depression was broke--and then radicalism gradually faded off the scene. And now for some 25, 28, maybe 30 years, as far as I know, there is no radical activity going on in the community. I'm the most outspoken of any of the radicals.

K: I had drawn up a list of questions that I had intended to ask you prior to coming to this interview and one of them concerns the period, again, that we have talked about earlier from 1900 to 1918. When we were discussing that period, I failed to ask you this question so I'm going to ask it of you now. I understand that you had an Uncle Zak [Zachariah Taylor Johnson Moultrie] and an Aunt Lou [Lucretia Shelby] who were, shall we say, colorful in the way that they lived. And I have come across a reference to the home that they lived in here in Terre Haute. I think it would be useful if you could describe for me what your Uncle Zak did for a living and how their home was constructed and how they lived and so forth.

S: If you read in that article....

K: Yes.

S: My aunt and my uncle, when they met, they both were impressed with the other's personality. Each thought that the other had money and for that reason, why, a courtship began. My aunt had about \$800 in the bank and my uncle owned a piece of property over in Posey County. I don't know its value. But at any rate the marriage took place.

K: When would that be?

S: Oh, I was about 6 years old I suppose. And later they moved to Terre Haute. He was a saw and hatchet carpenter and a master mechan-

ic of all trades.

K: What is a saw and hatchet carpenter?

S: Well, they get along and build things with a saw and a hatchet. And we had people working on the war depot when it was under construction and all the man had was a hatchet so he was just a hatchet carpenter. But that's all he needed. He went from war job to war job and all he had to do was split a piece of wood and drive a nail so he was taken on as a carpenter. So, my uncle was pretty much of that sort of person. He could turn his hand to anything and make it work.

So after arriving in Terre Haute he rented a few acres of ground and he grew sorghum cane. And at that time he was living in a tar paper shack. He'd bought a lot for \$1 down and 50¢ a week but he was just living--he and his wife--in this tar paper shack. So he bought the pan so that he could boil this sap and make sorghum molasses out of it. He discovered that he could take hickory bark and he could mix that in with brown sugar and to a gallon of this liquid he could add a pint of maple syrup and it tasted pretty much like maple syrup. So he made his living in the wintertime selling sorghum molasses and maple syrup. And when he'd saved enough money that he felt like he could make the venture he went to the Pennsylvania Shops where they were wrecking railroad cars and he bought car lumber. And he built a 5 room house up on north Sixteenth Street. It's now torn down but it stayed there for 35 or 40 years. After completing this house, then he began to diversify his products. He started raising horseradish and grinding it up and so he had horseradish added to his line of products. Now, being a little boy he would take me along in his wagon when he peddled his stuff and he'd let me do the driving and when we'd run out of beer--he had a little half-gallon bucket--he would send me into the saloon to get a bucket of beer and he would get a half-gallon for a nickel. Of course, there was a lot of suds on the top. And he always gave me the first drink out of the bucket. And to drive that horse and to listen to his tall tales was very entertaining to me.

Well, a good many of his customers were prostitutes because they spent money lavishly and occasionally he'd stay longer than I thought there was any need for but I overcome my impatience. So, then we'd start for home finally.

On the way home, with all this beer he'd been drinking all day long he'd be in a convivial mood so he'd usually wind up--somewhere along the street he'd stop the wagon and he'd climb back into the wagon and start making a political speech. And he was good at it. He'd memorized about a half-hour speech. And always it began, "What means, this great outpouring of people. What means this sea of human faces I see before me." And then he'd go on with this harangue for 30 minutes, climb back in the seat and we'd drive on. I never knew him to have an audience of more than a half-dozen people but nevertheless he seemed to like to make those speeches.

K: Did he have any end in mind with the speeches other than entertainment?

S: I don't recall now, it passed in one ear and out the other.

K: Right.

S: But my uncle was a bumco man and a liar and a cheat, everything despicable. And one of his failings was he liked to impress people. So he took a corncob and broke it so it was the size of money and then he'd wrap a bunch of bills around the corncob. He'd double them so it looked like he had twice as many as he had, on the outside he'd put the bill of the highest denomination. And everyplace he'd go, wherever he had an opportunity, he'd bring this wad of bills out of his pocket to brag about. And you could never see anything except the top bill, it would look like it was a huge roll of bills.

So one time he was in Pete Rife's Saloon and he was a very argumentative person when he was under the influence of liquor and he was always challenging people to a fight. People that knew him paid no attention to him. So, this young Englishman came in and my uncle didn't know him and he challenged him to a fight. So the Englishman was drinking his glass of beer and he drew that back and hit my uncle in the face with that glass of beer and knocked him flat. And three days later somebody asked my uncle, "Where did you get that black eye?"

And he said, "Well, I just took in too much territory when I invited him to fight." So that was my uncle.

I might add that they had an evangelistic meeting up in his neighborhood and he became a convert to religion. And they wanted to build a church and my uncle agreed to do the carpentry on it. So, after the church was completed he was made a deacon of the church and he was very faithful in his attendance. But after some weeks passed some ladies--members of the congregation--visited my aunt and when she was going through the trunk to find some pictures or something to show them they discovered that there was a cache of liquor stored away in the trunk. So they put my uncle on church trial and his accusers--my uncle got all the skeletons out of their closets and used them against them. And it was a very interesting trial, no doubt. I didn't hear it and participate in it but from what I heard about it, why, the whole community was in uproars over it.

While the trial was going on, the top of the church blew off and the saloon, about 3 blocks away, remained untouched by the tornado. So, my uncle brought that in as a clinching argument that God was on his side. It was clearly demonstrated that the church was in the wrong when that roof was ripped off. Nevertheless they threw him out of church. So, then my uncle went back to his wicked, wicked ways.

K: From what you told me about your uncle's tar paper home and also about other tar paper shacks and dwellings made out of refrigerator cartons and things of that nature, I get the impression that there

were not very stringent zoning regulations or anything like that here in Terre Haute. Can you give me a better understanding of that? Was it possible to build a house anywhere you chose out of any materials you chose?

S: Well, there was an attempt 2 or 3 times by the city council to impose building restrictions. But the poor had to live somewhere and they automatically migrated to where they could buy cheap lots, put up a cheap structure. A person who had an income of \$1.50 a day is not apt to build on south Fifth and Sixth Street where the homes cost \$15,000, \$20,000, \$30,000. They had to build where their meager money would let them build.

K: And where was that?

S: Well, there were a number of subdivisions opened up around Terre Haute. One was opened up north of Lost Creek and extended from Lost Creek to Ft. Harrison Road, from Thirteenth Street to [the] Pennsylvania tracks. And in the lowland--Lost Creek flooded occasionally--you could buy a lot for \$40 and pay 50¢ down and 25¢ a week. On the higher ground you paid from \$40 on up, depending on the location of the lot.

Now, most people, when they built a shack, they had to build it piecemeal because they didn't have money enough to complete it. So, a tar paper shack was the beginning of a more substantial shack. If you got hold of the 2x4s--and they came out of the cars, they were not 2x4, they were smaller in dimension--but if you got enough of those to make studding to make rafters, well, then you had the beginning of a house. So, if you covered it with tar paper inside and out you might live in it a year or 2 years. And then if you became a little prosperous, well, you bought weatherboard or siding and you sided the outside, and then you later on might buy lath and plaster the inside, and by degrees you developed a home. So this was typical of poor people and the way they built their habitation.

K: Was the lumber from the wrecking operation of the Pennsylvania Railroad given to them free of charge or did they have to pay for it?

S: They charged people \$1 for all they could haul away on a wagon. And if you had a great big wagon and 2 to 4 horses, you could haul an enormous amount of stuff away from there. And usually the floors and the subfloor and all the inner structure of the house was built of car lumber. And then the outer structure could be weatherboarding and the inner structure could be lath and plaster. It was a good way to begin.

K: I believe you indicated earlier that that practice continued on through the 1930s, is that correct?

S: It did. I built a house in the country--I bought an acreage there when I came back from Chicago in 1923.

K: Can you tell me what area--tell me where?

S: Well, it's located on what is called Quinn Road. It was the old Stop 19 road. Stop 19 was a road used by the interurban cars. It took us several years to build that house. The first house we built was a chicken house. We built it in the early summer and while we lived in it we built a garage. We lived in the garage for several years. Then one of my uncles died.

K: Did you have a car at that time?

S: Not at that time, no. I carried my groceries on my back, a half-mile--better than a half-mile.

K: You were planning ahead then when you built a garage. You planned, I guess, for future automobiles.

S: That's right. We had our plans in mind for building a house but we built it step by step. So, with the garage completed and the well down and all, I was able to sell five acres off this 30-acre tract. Then I built a 12x36 foot structure that I later intended to use in a permanent house with the material I knew would be good and so we lived in that structure 3 or 4 years while we were saving money to start the house. Finally, we got money ahead and we dug the basement --my son dug the basement--I laid up the cement blocks and the foundation. We bought car lumber and built a subfloor over the sills and the sleepers. At the end of that year, we had a roof over our heads and we had an enclosed house? we had the doors and windows in place, we had tar paper covering the outside boards. But we didn't have any lath or any plaster on the inside, we just had a subfloor. It took us 7 or 8 years to complete that home: to put in hardwood floors, to put in finishing lumber and the plaster and everything that went with it.

K: Was it built almost entirely out of car lumber?

S: No, the inner structure--the subfloor--was the only car lumber we used. The rest of it was new material. But that's the way people did in those days. All the houses on this road were built just as I built my house. They are all very substantial, well-built homes. They've been there for years.

K: You say there are some of them in existence now?

S: They are all there.

K: They are all there still?

S: All you have to do is drive down the road and you'll see house after house that was built by the people that moved into them as occupants. That way you learn to be a carpenter and you learn to be a plasterer. Your whole family had a part in completing a structure. My youngest daughter was about 8 years old. She tacked on the lath as high up as she could reach. My older daughter took over from there, she tacked it up to the ceiling. My son and I tacked the lath

onto the ceiling. The whole family went into the woods and selected shade trees that we planted. We selected wild flowers that my wife liked. This home belonged to all of us and it was not something that a contractor built and had an impersonal atmosphere. It was something that we created as a family--the family unit--and I'm quite certain that this had a profound influence upon shaping the character of my children.

K: When did you finally acquire an automobile?

S: Oh, about 3 years after we moved to the country I was able to buy an automobile. Until that time, I carried all my groceries and everything on my back.

K: And you would commute to work on foot?

S: Yes.

K: What was the distance between your home and the knife factory where you worked?

S: The distance? Well, the knife factory was out at Twenty-second and Locust Street and my home was 8 miles north on 41 so I had to travel by interurban, get off at Locust Street and catch a city car over to the plant. It required getting up early and I was late getting home but I didn't mind it, I was young and in good health.

K: How did the acquisition of an automobile change your life?

S: Well, it probably didn't change my life. Oh, you mentioned the first automobile I ever owned?

K: Yes.

S: Oh, that's different. The first automobile I owned was a Studebaker and I got it in 1918--1917 or 1918--1917. And I made a trip to the east coast within about 3 weeks after I bought it. And I didn't know how to change a tire, I didn't know a darn thing about the automobile. I just knew that you turned a switch and opened the petcocks and put in the gasoline and it would go. So, we had brand new Fisk tires guaranteed for 3,000 miles when we started out. And the Route 40 road was just then being improved--graveled--not paved but graveled. And there was no pavement on the road.

K: How broad was the road?

S: It was all gravel all the way to the east coast at that time.

K: I say, how broad was it?

S: Oh, very narrow, 30 feet, something like that.

K: Did it have ditches on either side? Was it drained?

S: Yes, it had ditches on both sides.

K: So, you were going to tell me something about your trip.

S: Well, we didn't wear goggles and it was hot weather in July. Naturally, we sweated a lot. And when we arrived at the town where we wanted to put up for the night, you couldn't tell whether we were black or white. We wiped some of the dirt out of our eyes and that gave us sort of a clownish look. Now, my son was old enough to remember the experience but my next child, my daughter, she was too small. Anyway, this Studebaker could make 45 miles an hour on the straightaway and it could make 55 or 60 downhill. So, not realizing the hazards of driving I would coast down a hill and maybe I'd pass some half-a-dozen cars and then on the upgrade they'd pass me. Then, of course, we would wave--that was part of the entertainment. When we reached Wheeling, Virginia, I attempted to go up a grade there out of Wheeling. I'd get halfway up the incline and the engine would die so I would have to back down and make another start. Trying to get up that hill lasted for several minutes. A crowd had collected and they cheered when I looked like I was going to make it, you know, and then you'd hear groans when I failed and had to back down again.

Finally, a mechanic said, "Let me get on the running board and raise that hood and see if I can find out what the trouble is." Well, it didn't take him very long to find out. When we started up the hill this magneto cap--the spring had worked loose and it didn't make contact--and as soon as I was on the level, it would go back to place again. So, he made the adjustment and I went on my way.

K: At that time how long did it take to drive, let's say, from Terre Haute to Indianapolis on Route 40?

S: Well, on that dirt road you were lucky to make 20, 25 miles an hour because it was very bumpy and you never knew when you were going to hit a hole, you know, that would throw you through the windshield, so you were compelled to drive with caution.

K: Was that a major trade route at that time? Was there much freight being shipped on Route 40?

S: I don't know, that was the first time I had traveled over it that far so I couldn't give you any information about that. Probably though the trucks were beginning to move and cars were being bought by farmers and trucks were being bought by farmers. And certainly there was the beginning of the desire on the part of the traveling public to improve the highways.

And so when we got near Indianapolis why we found a mud hole and a fellow towing people across--\$3 a car. And the man seemed to feel that I deserved a break and he said, "If you drive a half-mile north and stay on that road for a couple of miles you can come back on the highway and it's all right." So I didn't have to pay the \$3.

When we got close to Frederick, Maryland, we got into some soft sand on the road and the Studebaker had a gear case made out of some kind of metal that was about as substantial as a piece of porcelain. So the gear case broke open and the gears scattered all over the road. We telephoned into Frederick and had a man come and gather up the gears and the gear case and tow us into Frederick. So, we spent the night there and we had an opportunity to go out and look at the battlefield. And the next day we took a train and I went to Atlantic City to attend the Glassblower Convention and my wife went to New York to stay with her sister-in-law.

So, after we had completed our visit and was ready to come home, infantile paralysis or some disease had caused New York to be quarantined and we had to wait several days in order to get out of New York. So, while we were there we visited some of the points of interest including the art museum and Grant's tomb and places like that and we finally went to a zoo. This was the first time I had ever been in a zoo. And they had cleaned and disinfected the monkey cages and apparently they had washed down the iron bars with a soap and a rag because these monkeys were being fed and when they got through eating their banana they'd take their banana skin and repeat the performance of the sanitation engineers. They'd rub these bars down, you know. They were every one busy rubbing down bars on their cages and that struck me and my children as being very amusing and showed how quickly animals will pick up human habits.

K: You took a train then back to Frederick, Maryland, and got your car there and drove all the way back to Terre Haute?

S: Well, when we got back to Frederick, Maryland, our car was repaired so we decided--after asking for information--that we would take the Lincoln Highway back. And the Lincoln Highway had been covered with crushed rock all the way back--I suppose to Chicago.

K: What was the number, what route was the Lincoln Highway?

S: The Lincoln Highway?

K: Highway number what?

S: I don't know what route it would be called today but then it was referred to as the Lincoln Highway. But this sharp crushed rock riddled our tires and by the time we had reached Marion, Indiana, our tires were, you might say, in ribbons and one day we changed tires 19 times. Now, that meant repairing the innertubes. And we sure didn't make much progress that day. So, my uncle lived in Anderson, Indiana, and we managed to get to Anderson and there I borrowed a little money to go further. We finally got to Putnamville and the gears fell out of the case again. So, we used our last penny for bus fare to come on to Terre Haute and I decided that a motor car was just too expensive so I disposed of it. That car today would be worth a fortune.

K: Yes, it certainly would.

S: But it had petcocks above the cylinders and you'd have to go out and squirt gasoline in these petcocks and then close them and then you'd crank. And sometimes you had to repeat that 2 or 3 times and there would be a quart of gasoline in the engine before the cylinders would fire. When the explosion came, smoke and soot would fly 40 feet out of the exhaust and if the timer was out of adjustment it sounded like a Gatling Gun going down the street. People would rush out to see what was happening. It was a boner, I'll tell you.

K: Can you tell me anything about travelers accommodations at that time?

S: Well, they were very crude. The first stop we made just had a sign on the side of the building "Rooms for Rent." So, we went in and they said, "Well we'll serve you a meal,"--a supper, and they served breakfast--and "we'll allow you a room with two beds in it," and, "\$5." So, it was a feather bed and I hadn't slept on a feather bed since I was a child. And when you laid back in that feather bed, why, you didn't know whether you was ever going to get out of it again. So, that was our first sleeping accommodation.

The next time we stopped was at sort of a cabin-type motel and the accommodations there were \$3.50 for the night--2 beds in the room. There was no such thing as elaborate accommodations for tourists such as modernized tourist facilities. We went to one place to stop--it was all brightly lighted and looked very attractive--but it was accommodations for well-to-do people and when they took one look at us they wouldn't accommodate us. They told us to go on down the road a good distance and we'd find accommodations.

K: Did motels at that time also provide rooms for people who were traveling by horse drawn conveyances?

S: I presume they did. In fact, we found 5 or 6 toll gates on the way east.

K: Any of them in Indiana?

S: No, none in Indiana but in Pennsylvania we found several. And in Virginia we found one or two. You paid a nickel or dime and the gate was raised and you passed on and that was it.

K: Now, I had earlier asked you if the purchase of your automobile in 1923, I guess it would have been--or the second automobile you bought at any rate--the one that you bought once you had returned to Terre Haute. I asked you if that had made any change in your life and I don't think you had answered that.

S: I don't think there was any fundamental changes. I maintained faith in my ideology.

K: No, I didn't mean that.

S: I had my ups and downs here in Terre Haute. After some years, we

had a depression and the knife shop lost a good portion of its business and several firms in the east conspired to put them out of business. When they began operating, they sold to anyone and everyone that would buy their product. But a firm, a large jobbing house from Kansas City, Missouri, came in one day and said, "We'll buy every knife you can make at so much. We'll take everything." And the owners of the shop thought this would be a good deal so they dropped scores of little customers. That was, regular customers sustaining them in their business. And they went over-producing for this one customer. So, in the beginning, the first few months, the knives were accepted and then all at once they began sending them back saying they were not up to their standard; they were not properly finished, the steel wasn't of the quality they anticipated, this, that, and the other. In other words, they went in deliberately to break up this firm. And we learned later on that it was a conspiracy between this jobbing firm and several knife shops in the east. They just set out deliberately to crush a competitor. And so that was the beginning of the end to the Wabash Cutlery Company.

K: Now what period was that, what time, what year?

S: Well, it was the beginning of the depression, it would be in the early thirties.

K: OK.

S: So, the Depression finished the job and they went out of business.

K: About how many men were unemployed?

S: Oh, there was probably 225, 250 men worked there at the height of the season.

K: It was seasonal work?

S: Well, they made more knives in the fall and winter than they did in the summer.

K: Do you have any idea why that should be so?

S: Well, no, unless people had more leisure time to whittle. But it was quite evident that the Christmas business--knives were given away, you know, as presents--up until the Christmas business from, say, September to Christmas it flourished at its best. And the remainder of the year it tended to drop off to some extent.

K: Was the work that was done at the Wabash Cutlery Company essentially handwork?

S: Yes, very limited use of machinery. Now, later on inventions came into the knife business: automatic grinding of the blades and automatic polishing and buffing and things of that sort is now done by machinery. But at that time it took 228 operations to complete a pocket knife and all required some degree of skill.

K: The men who were employed there then would have been at least semiskilled laborers. There would be some skill required for each operation.

S: And the wages that prevailed in the plant was better than average wage. It was a good place to work.

K: Did it remain a nonunion plant until it closed its doors?

S: Yes.

K: Were there ever any attempts to organize it?

S: No, the only organizing that was ever attempted was by the Klan.

K: Now, tell me about that.

S: A member of the Klan came one day and wanted to talk to the employees at the noon hour. So, we all sat outside in the hot weather to eat our lunch and when we finished eating, why, he began his spiel. He said, "All of you that want to get the Catholic teachers out of public schools, and all of you that wants to put the Negro in his place, and all of you that want the foreign-born sent back to their native land, and all of you that want to see that the Jews and the Catholics don't dominate the downtown business center; you should join the Klan." He said, "We've organized the stamping mill 100 percent.

K: Had they?

S: Well, according to his statement. He said, "Nobody can get a job in the stamping mill from now on that is not a member of the Klan except we're going to organize all the factories on the same basis. So, you fellows sitting here, if you want to hold your job, when we get this plant organized, if you're not a member of the Klan, you'll be looking for a job. Well, nobody bought. We booted him and sent him on his way. Well, there's your typical Klan.

K: That would have been about what year?

S: It was before the depression began. This was when Coolidge was having his prosperity. It was in the late twenties.

K: Can you give me any other examples of Klan activity in Terre Haute in the 1920s, particularly of an economic nature such as the one you just....

S: Well, we had a druggist, a Catholic operated drug store at Twelve Points; the Klan boycotted his business. He'd been established for years and they forced him into bankruptcy.

K: When you say they boycotted it, do you mean there was something they would not buy there or was there picketing activity going on?

S: They wouldn't buy there and they wouldn't let anybody else buy there that they could prevent.

K: What methods did they employ to prevent people from buying there?

S: Well, they circulated that he was on the Klan blacklist, that was all they had to do. And a member of the Klan wouldn't go near the place. They had a huge Klan meeting between Haythorne Avenue and North Terre Haute, over on the west side of the road. There was a large acreage there that was bare and the Klan held a rally there. They burned fire crosses all over the city and then they burned the biggest one here at the rallying point. And they peddled white shirts and caps to whoever would join. It was a big affair.

I went to visit a friend of mine in the south end of town and this man said, "You'll have to excuse me for a few minutes, I have some fellow Klansmen meeting in my kitchen." So, I remained in the sitting room and he went in to associate with the Klansmen. The door was left ajar and I could hear parts of what went on. Now, they were going to lay switches on the porch of a Negro in the neighborhood and a note on it telling him to get out of town within 24 hours or he would be horsewhipped. Now, that went on in this back kitchen.

Because of my radical views, when the depression was at its height, I was leading demonstrations and doing things the Klan condemned. So, I was sitting in my front room reading and I pulled the shade so I didn't see what was going on outside but this lane for a half-mile was filled with Klansmen's cars. And at that time there was a vacant field across the road from me. So, they went out in this field and they erected a cross and they set it on fire to intimidate me. Now, some friends of mine who were Catholics lived about 250, 300 feet away. They were lying in my orchard with shotguns trained on the Klansmen. And they said if a Klansman had entered my yard they intended to shoot him. So, the next day I went to a man that I knew was a leader in the Klan--lived in North Terre Haute.

K: Who was that?

S: I can't think of his name now. He ran a grocery store there and was very active in the Klan. I told him what had transpired and how near some of the Klansmen came to being shot and I said, "Now, if you fellows ever make any further attempt to intimidate me in any way and you ever set foot on my ground, I'm going to shoot you and I'm going to kill you." And I said, "You may not be the only one because when I start shooting I'll know it's "goodbye" and I'll just kill as many of you as I know." So I said, "Now you bear that in mind." Well, I was never bothered by the Klan after that. But these were terrorists, racists, scum and of the lowest order of mentality.

K: Tell me when you first began to become aware of Klan activity in Terre Haute. About what period did it begin to gain steam?

S: Oh, I first became aware of the Klan when I was in Chicago. The Klan developed there long before it took root here in Indiana. And

some of my friends remembered the Klan and kept me informed about its growth in Illinois. When it moved into Indiana, why, it was like a prairie fire; within 2 years it had taken over the state apparatus and elected a governor. And by the way, the governor is still over here in Brazil practicing law. He was charged with the crime in office and they waited until the crime was outlawed by time and then they dropped the prosecution. Otherwise he would have been sent to prison. But he's still practicing law, still regarded as a good citizen. So I can't say exactly when I did become acquainted with the Klan activity in a small way. It was established here 4 or 5 years before it took root and it began to flourish. And we have Klansmen here now; we have a small Klan organization functioning in Terre Haute at the present time.

K: Were you aware that the Klan influence was declining when it began to decline here in Terre Haute? And to what did you attribute its decline?

S: It passed off the scene almost as rapidly as it had taken root. Well, the death of this [Madge] Oberholtzer woman drawing all the attention to Stevenson. By that time a lot of people that had gone in the Klan had seen what results were coming out of it and had become disgusted and they had dropped out. So, it was just like a lot of other fads, once it started to disappear, why, they pushed it under the carpet.

K: Now with the failure of the Wabash Cutlery Company--is that the correct name for it?

S: Yes. Well, it finally went out of business during the depression.

K: What did you then do for a living?

S: Well, I turned my attention to selling fruit trees to Stark Brothers. It proved very profitable for awhile until I had exhausted the local area around Terre Haute, and when the distance became too great to travel and make any money, why, by that time I decided to go on to Chicago [or] some place and find employment.

K: You couldn't find employment here in Terre Haute then?

S: Oh, no. No, there was employment for women but men had a very difficult time finding a job.

K: Now why is that, why was there employment for women and not for men here?

S: Well, the Quaker Maid and various other industries could employ women in lower wages, that was the main reason. Also, some types of skill could be acquired by women more readily than by men.

K: Can you give me some examples of that kind of skill?

S: Well at the Quaker Maid I went in the office and applied for em-

ployment and, of course, I was turned down. And I went around to another entrance and went up on the top floor where the big shot had his office and for some reason he admitted me. So, I told him that I'd been out of employment for a long time and was looking for work. And he said, "Well if you wore skirts I could hire you." But he said, "I don't have any employment for men." He said, "If you have a daughter that is old enough to work, why, I'll give her employment." He says, "We need some people to stuff olives." So my daughter was hired and she worked there for several months stuffing olives. And it was a skill easily acquired by a woman but probably very difficult for a man to learn how to stuff olives in a bottle and get that red spot to look attractive. That was one of the reasons.

So, then after a long spell of discouragement, I worked for Cowan Brothers; I worked for the Payne Landscape Company a few months at a time. I would go out with landscape material in my car. We raised popcorn and I'd sack it up in cellophane bags. I'd go to the groceries and put the corn on the shelves on consignment; when it was sold I'd replenish the stock. I would visit and maybe get a landscape job and trade something for it. We eked out an existence.

K: Was there much barter going on in Terre Haute at that time?

S: Yes, a lot of barter. You could get your teeth fixed or do a lot of things, you know, and make an exchange in some other type of labor. So this bartering went on all the time.

Finally, I went to a spiritualist meeting. I'd promised a man time and again that I would attend one of his meetings and, I might say, that I was completely discouraged and thought I was never going to find a suitable job here in Terre Haute. Well, at this meeting there was a medium from Indianapolis that came in and she came before me and she said, "You're going to receive an offer of employment very shortly." And she said, "It will be in that direction," and she pointed northeast. Well, of course, I pooh poohed the idea, I thought it was a lot of bunk.

But the very next day a friend of mine that I'd worked with in a wood shop here in Terre Haute, he came out to my house and he said, "My brother is in charge of the department in a wood shop in Elkhart, Indiana, where they make novelty furniture and he needs somebody to help him--somebody that's old enough and experienced enough to share the responsibility of the department." He said, "I'll loan you my tools and when you get up there and get established and buy your own tools you can send them back." So, that very afternoon I left Terre Haute and went to Elkhart, Indiana, to work in his shop.

K: How long did you remain up there in Elkhart?

S: I remained up there probably 9 or 10 months.

K: Was your family still here in Terre Haute?

S: Yes, I sent them part of my paycheck every weekend and it helped,

of course. But my son was working at Commercial Solvents at the time and he was also helping to support the family. At the end of the 10-month period, the company was on the decline and it looked like they'd go into bankruptcy due to the depression so I decided before losing out completely I'd go to Chicago and see if I couldn't find work in some other wood shop where there was a possibility of them remaining in business. So, I quit my job and went to Chicago and I hired out with a firm that made very fine walnut end tables and cabinets and that type of furniture. I worked for them for several weeks. They paid the lowest wages of any wood shop in Chicago and I couldn't see any possibility of increasing my income by remaining there.

So the firm that I had worked for here in Terre Haute--Schwartz Picture Frame Company--they went bankrupt here but the man who ran the shop made a practice of going bankrupt and always salvaged enough to start a new plant. So, he had opened up a new shop in Chicago and I heard about it. So I went over and hired out to work in his shop. And after a few months working there--nearly all the employees were Polish--and they were not unfriendly and neither were they friendly. They were kind of standoffish. But I worked on one of the sanding machines with a Polish worker and one of the gears had to be replaced in the machine. So, while he was replacing this gear--the machine being idle--the excitable foreman that we had came in and he saw the machine idle and he rushes over to the switch box to throw the switch and it would have chewed up this man's hand. So, I grabbed him and threw him away from the switch box and it saved that hand. So, this Polish fellow was so grateful that he became my friend and he also let it be known around among the rest of the Poles that I was all right.

So, one of the employees there had fought in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the liberation movement. He had returned and was very unhappy about conditions in the plant because it was nonunion. So, we talked about organizing it and a week or so after our conversation we received a handbill from the Carpenter's Union calling us to attend a meeting to unionize the plant. Well, I was the only one that attended. And there were so few there that the organizer of the Carpenter's Union had a chance to talk with me and he learned that I'd been a member of organized labor for a long time and knew something about organizing technique and so he wanted me to be the treasurer. And he continued to be the organizer. So, the next meeting, a week later, this young man that fought in the Spanish Civil War and myself, we canvassed everybody in the plant and we had 100 percent turnout at the next meeting. So, we organized the plant. Well, this unionizing spread very rapidly and it wasn't long before we had about 6,000 woodworkers organized.

In the meantime the Carpenter's Union organizer had appointed an organizer and he was taking on responsibilities in some other area. So, the organizer he appointed was a young Italian and this young fellow immediately brought in 2 of his buddies as bodyguards and the typical gangster attitude. He would call the owners of the plant and threaten to burn down their buildings or threaten harm to their

children or something like that in order to frighten them into organizing. Well, I, of course, told the Carpenter's Union organizer about it but he was getting results, he was bringing people in. So, the organizer said, "Well we'll take care of that later. Right now we want to get them organized."

"So, this organizer would collect money in the way of dues and then put it into his pocket instead of turning it over to me for the records. Well, I was under bond and could be sent to the penitentiary if my books didn't balance. So, I went to the Carpenter's organizer and I told him the situation. I said, "I'm not going to risk imprisonment just to accommodate your protege that's doing the organizing. Either he has to be left out of the picture or I'm going to resign." So I resigned and it was near Christmastime so I came back to Terre Haute.

And along in early January, I received a letter from a member of the union. He said, "We've all gone over to the CIO." He said this organizer had taken them all out of the Carpenter's Union because it was so slow getting a contract and the CIO had promised them immediate results. So, here I was in Terre Haute with a Carpenter's Union card so I just took it down to the local union and deposited it and I've been a member of this local union since--about 40 years.

K: Did you stay in Terre Haute then?

S: Yes, I stayed in Terre Haute.

K: And what year would that have been?

S: Well that would have been about '27, '28, somewhere in that period.

K: It would have had to have been later than that if it were the CIO.

S: Oh, it was in the thirties, '37 or '38. I know it was well along in the years of the depression at the time.

K: Were you here in Terre Haute at the time of the general strike of 1935?

S: Yes.

K: And how long had you been here prior to that at that time? Had you come back from Chicago prior to that?

S: Yes, I came back before the general strike took place. I might say that I had experience in photography when I was a young man. I hung around a studio and learned the rudiments of photography. I bought an 8 by 10 view camera and done what they call "kidnapping"--that's photographing babies--taking a chance on making a sale. So, I had my camera and I had my equipment to make pictures. So, when I came back from Chicago I started kidnapping again. And my son let me use his car so I went from door to door and set up appointments and made pictures of children. It proved to be a paying proposition from the very beginning even though the depression was on. So later

on I secured a location in the downtown area and opened a legitimate studio [629 1/2 Wabash Avenue] and operated it for 16 years. All through the war I operated it as a business, and some time after the war ended.

Now, the general strike [of 1935] was the result of several things. One was that the [Columbian Enameling and Stamping Co.] stamping mill, from the very beginning, had a spy system set up to ferret out information about union activities and anybody that made any attempt to organize the plant was sure to be detected and fired. This went on for years and years.

And the company antagonized the whole community by clinging to the contract with the city. It had been given a large tract of land free and exempt from taxation for 99 years. Now, the city had built up all around the plant. It had police protection, it had fire protection, and yet it wouldn't pay us any taxes. It was out of the city. And so it became a political issue at election after election. The people would run on a platform of "we'll take the stamping mill into the city." But once they gained office they would forget about that pledge and the stamping mill stayed out of the city.

Well, finally during the depression they managed to get an organization rooted in the plant--the union--and conditions were so intolerable that the majority--the vast majority--of the employees joined the union. So, they tried to negotiate a contract and the company was willing to accept part of the contract but they were unwilling to relinquish the right to hire and fire. And that meant that the contract was meaningless because they could fire the agitators anytime they wanted to.

So, the strike went on and for months it was peaceful. They had policemen stationed at the gates with the pickets and the policemen and the pickets would play cards all day long and fraternize and everything was peaceful. Because the demand for the products had fallen off to the point where all they had to do was go to the stockroom and get something out of the stock and they could fill the orders. They finally reached the point where they had to begin making new products. So, when they reached that stage they called Mayor [Samuel] Beecher--I mean the heads of the stamping mill--they called on Mayor Beecher who was supposed to be a friend of organized labor and they outlined a program where they could break the strike.

K: Now where did you get this information? What is your source of this information?

S: Well, it came out in the newspapers finally. They held a secret meeting in the Terre Haute House and some of the people that waited on tables had their ears to the door and they knew what was going on and they reported it to organized labor. Now the plan was, "We'll bring in armed guards from Chicago. We'll put them in the plant. That will create a hysterical situation in the community and these guards will taunt and tantalize and try to provoke some incident

violating the law. And when that happens then we'll call on you, Mayor Beecher, and your sheriff. And you call on Governor Paul McNutt and we'll get through to him and he'll send in the militia, and the militia will terrorize the community by imposing martial law, and they will protect strike breakers who enter the plant and we'll break the strike." Now there's the outline.

K: Now, organized labor was aware of this before it ever was put into effect?

S: They were aware of it because the leak came out through people that worked at the Terre Haute House where their secret meeting was held.

K: Did you personally know about this at that time?

S: Well, I knew about it because I was in contact with the labor leaders here all the time the strike was going on and before. I was quite active in their group.

K: Now, from the newspaper accounts I already have gained an understanding of what happened next and I know that 7 men were brought in and installed inside the plant and that what was reported to be a mob of unionists then entered the plant and destroyed most of what was inside it and took the guards out.

S: Well, the mob destroyed some office equipment, that was all.

K: And I believe broke out a lot of windows and things of that nature --right. Now the question I would like to ask of you today is who was responsible for that? The accounts that I have read indicate the unionists later apologized for having gone inside the plant and claimed that they had nothing whatever to do with it. What's the truth here?

S: [laughter] Well, Cubby Lark was a leader of coal miners across the river.

K: Cubby Lark? How do you spell his last name?

S: His son is connected with the police over there. Well, Cubby was a very much loved leader of the coal miners and he brought coal miners over here from West Terre Haute that were active in stirring up this mob at the factory gate. And from the laborers' standpoint they applauded--he did nothing wrong.

K: These are United Mine Workers then that went into the Columbian Stamping Plant?

S: Well, they were members of them but there was a mob there. People from all over the city took part in it. The people that had been brought in from Chicago were so scared that they hid all over the plant. Some of them were found hiding in the coal bins and I guess

it was a terrible experience for them because they didn't know if they were going to get out alive. At any rate, this served as the excuse to put this plan into execution. Now, Governor McNutt was fully aware of the plot, the sheriff was fully aware of the plot, and the plot had been hatched and approved by the business elite here in Terre Haute. The bankers and the business men and the manufacturers all were in a conspiracy--and that's what it was, a conspiracy.

K: Was there any effort by organized labor to make this conspiracy public?

S: Oh, yes, they published a leaflet. I've got it over there in the scrapbook.

K: And the leaflet came out prior to the events, then, that finally ended up in the declaration of martial law?

S: No, it was after. They didn't have time to publicize this fact until the militia was on the scene but after awhile, why, this leaflet was brought out explaining the situation and showing that the major responsibility for this rioting should be blamed on the conspirators of the business community rather than upon labor, that they precipitated the crisis.

K: Now the general strike itself, which occurred, of course, after the incident in the Columbian [Enameling and] Stamping Plant--the general strike itself did not have the approval of either the Vigo County Central Labor Union Council or of the AFL and I'm curious then, if that were the case, how such a thing could have occurred?

S: Well, there was an unofficial committee functioning without the approval of the Central Labor Council, without the approval of the American Federation of Labor. They were leaders of the strike but they wanted the blame to fall upon them as individuals rather than upon the unions which could be fined and punished severely. They felt that if anybody had to go to jail it should be one of these leaders. Now, this committee met every day while the strike was in progress, and days before and days afterwards. And I sat in on a number of these meetings so I know what transpired. Now, the strike itself lasted 24 hours and a few people went up and down the business center and told the storekeepers to close their stores. Now, there was a story in the papers that they had baseball bats. I don't know whether that was true or not. They didn't have to have baseball bats because the community as a whole was so irate that the stores would have been closed or bricks would have been thrown through the windows. So, they didn't need baseball bats or any other means of intimidation except to close your store until the strike's over--and the stores were closed. They made provisions to supply milk to babies, they made provisions for health care in the hospital, they made provision for police protection where it was necessary, for the fire trucks which would be used and all that. There was no attempt to cut off services related to health. And that condition prevailed throughout the strike. Now, as soon as the strike occurred it became headline news in all the papers all over the United States--general strike.

Now, the clippings that I have saved from Chicago and New York and other papers repeat what happened here. People were gassed numerous times; not once, not twice, but a number of times. They were not permitted more than 2 people to congregate on a street. The bayonet was pointed at you and you were told to move on.

And a teacher at the university [Indiana State Teachers College], Dr. John R. Shannon, he was crossing the street in front of the Labor Temple--or attempted to cross it. A soldier stopped him, put his gun up and Shannon started to tell him about the Bill of Rights and they marched Shannon off to jail. Within 2 days there was about--estimates, I believe, were around 130 people in jail. So Shannon began teaching classes in economics--Socialism--and the brutality of the police and the violation of our constitutional rights and this, that, and the other. And his wife brought him a clean shirt so he removed his old shirt and went around over the jail getting signatures on it. He told them it would be a historical keepsake. It had the names of all the brave people that were willing to go to jail to defend the constitution while that bastard McNutt was violating it. So his shirt was covered with signatures. I forget his name now--I should know it because I've known him for years--came from Indianapolis to attempt to make a speech. He and the fellow that came with him were both thrown in jail--no free speech. So the Socialist and the Communist Party got together and they....

K: And they numbered about how many people here?

S: Oh, I suppose there was about 40 or 50 people present. And they conversed with Norman Thomas, asked him to come here and make an issue of free speech and defy the militia and defy the governor. So he came. And a fellow by the name of [Joseph] Jacobs from Chicago, an attorney, came with Thomas. And a young woman by the name of White that lives here, she was on this welcoming committee. So Thomas made his speech. He defied them to arrest him or anybody else and he broke the martial law. From that time on things began to move away from the unconstitutional behavior of the governor.

K: Let's go back again to who actually organized the general strike though. You told me earlier that it was a committee of ex-oficio individuals. About how many people was it?

S: I think there were about 10 on that committee.

K: And who would the most prominent members of it have been?

Well, Tom N. Fuson, who is still living, lives over across the river; he was probably one of the most prominent on that committee. Hiram Blood was another and there was a labor mediator who had served in that capacity--a member of organized labor. I don't think he held that office then but he was sitting on this committee and making suggestions.

K: Now I had asked you on the other side if any members of the committee were from outside organized labor.

S: No one from outside had any part in instigating the strike. It was purely a local affair.

K: I don't mean from outside Terre Haute. I mean anybody outside of organized labor. Were there any interests other than labor represented in this?

S: No one outside of organized labor had any part in it.

K: Did the United Mine Workers play as strong a role in the general strike as they did in the overwhelming of the stamping plants?

S: Well, they had their representatives in this group but the decisions were very democratically arrived at and no one seemed to play a dominant role unless it would be Tom N. Fusion.

K: And these were, as you say, democratic decisions then. There were actually elections--or rather votes taken?

S: That's right, they would discuss an issue and ask for a vote on it and make their decision by means of this vote.

K: I understand that you were present for a number of these meetings. Can you give me an idea of what the various arguments for and against the general strike may have been? What sort of opposition there was to it and....

S: Well, after the troops moved in it was....

K: No, I mean prior to that.

S: It was largely a discussion of how to get rid of the troops, how to re-establish free speech and peaceable assembly and constitutional right. And Norman Thomas was looked upon as our chief hope to do that.

K: I mean prior to the troops coming in though. I'm talking about the actual decision to hold a general strike. Was there any opposition to that decision?

S: No, the decision was to support the strikers and they already knew about this conspiracy. So, naturally there was a great deal of feeling aroused by knowing this plan of the elite in the community to break the strike by terrorism and use the forces of government to accomplish their ends.

K: I'm curious as to what effect the general strike may have had other than actually enabling the workers at the Columbian [Enameling] Stamping Plant to eventually return to their jobs. What effect on the community of Terre Haute did the general strike have?

S: Well, for a number of years it polarized the community. There was bitter feeling developed between the ruling class and the ordinary citizen and later a meeting was called by the business community.... The second meeting that was called by the Chamber of Commerce and the

Manufacturers Association. It, too, was a secret meeting but the facts leaked out and we got the names of all those present and I have them over here in a scrap book. They represented the very wealthy people in Terre Haute: the bankers, the business men, the manufacturers, lawyers, the mayor was there, the sheriff was there and other public officials. Now, the working people, the unions especially, were abused throughout this meeting and there was a call to set up a vigilante committee to deal with future trouble with the unions. It was a typical form of hysteria that develops when groups are polarized. Now, it took several years for this polarization to fade out of the local scene and quite a number of years after the strike was over, people were still saying the reason that Terre Haute didn't make progress was the attitude of the unions in that general strike. They blamed the hotheads in the union for keeping industries out of the community. And, of course, the unions on the other hand blamed the low wage scales that were payed here compared with other communities was responsible for keeping factories out of the community. So that argument is still going on no doubt.

K: Did the Hulman family have any role in that 1935 general strike?

S: No, I don't think their names were mentioned. They were not present at any of these meetings that I know of.

K: At none of these secret meetings then?

S: No.

K: That's very interesting. Do you have any idea why that might be so--as charter members of what you would term the ruling class here?

S: No, and there's no mention of the Blumbergs being there.

K: Are there any other prominent Terre Haute families that are notable for their absence from these secret meetings?

S: Well, I would say the fact that the Blumbergs and the Hulmans remained away might indicate they felt no personal involvement. They were above the ordinary elite. They lived in a world reserved only for those special wealthy people and they contribute to both political parties. As Ben Blumberg expressed it to me--somebody was criticizing him because he rented me a room for my studio--"Ben, how can you let one of your office rooms there to a man you know to be a radical?"

And Ben said, "I told him that I wanted friends on both sides of the barricade." So, I think probably the Hulman family feels that state of detachment. They are so wealthy that some little rumble connected with one of their business enterprises would make very little impression upon them. They leave all these decisions to subordinates, feel no personal involvement.

K: And there was no subordinate representation then from them?

S: No. However, the leading members, the Chamber of Commerce, bankers and manufacturers were there. What I mean by that, the presidents and those that we regard as the nominal leaders.

K: During the depression in Terre Haute did you or your family have any personal experience with government relief programs?

S: No, I never applied for any type of relief. My brother, during the depression, applied for a job on the WPA and even WPA was a political instrument and it was used to help some and to shoulder others to the side.

K: Can you give me an example of how that worked?

S: Well, I'll tell you how it worked in his case. He had bought a small acreage that had been used for coal mining and there was a huge gob pile on his place.

K: A gob pile? What is that?

S: Well, gob is the waste materials that is discarded when coal is brought to surface. It's slate and dirt and pieces of coal that can't be merchandised so they call it "gob". And back in the days when they were paving roads this gob was used instead of gravel to improve the roads. It would harden and provide a very good surface.

So, my brother applied for a job on WPA and they turned him down. But they were hauling gob from this mine area and so I told my brother, I said, "Now, when they open the gates tomorrow morning you tell them they can't come in. And when they give you a job on WPA they can have gob out of the gob pile." So he did that and he was hired. Now, if he hadn't had that card to play he wouldn't have been on WPA. And there were hundreds of people turned away from WPA because they didn't vote the Democrat ticket, because they weren't subservient to somebody that was promoting the program. Very rank discrimination went on all through the period of programs of relief. And it applies today just the same as it did then.

K: We've been talking about some specific incidents that occurred during the 1930s in Terre Haute. I would appreciate it if you could give me a general understanding of the more important changes that occurred in Terre Haute during the 1930s.

S: Well, in spite of the depression people slowly began to acquire new habits. They were out of work and they had no money to provide them with entertainment so the entertainment that was least expensive was visiting their neighbors and friends. And this cemented friendly relationships that had not developed before and certainly do not exist today. And this feeling of communal life, of wanting to help one another, prevailed throughout the whole social structure. It even found its way--in the early stages of the depression--it found its way into the very elite in the community.

K: Can you give me some examples of that?

S: Well, Lena Reading [executive secretary, American Red Cross], who ran a charitable organization here in Terre Haute, supplied people with food and paid rent and so forth--she had a hard time getting funds. In the early changes of the depression when people couldn't pay their rents they were evicted, their furniture was set out on the street.

So the radicals in the community organized what they called an Unemployed Council. This council was composed of people who were out of work and in need of everything--food and everything else--and they grew until they had some 4,000 members connected with them--quite a bit of power. So, when somebody had their furniture set in the street they would call--send somebody to our headquarters and a bunch of men would go out and set the furniture back in the house.

Well, this created a bad situation; for the landlord he couldn't pay taxes because he couldn't collect rent and the poor devil couldn't pay rent because he didn't have any employment. And the charity had run out of funds so they couldn't pay rent because they didn't have any funds either. So, in that situation the ministerial association and the Unemployed Council called a public meeting and Ben Blumberg and a number of wealthy people participated in that meeting. And as a result, funds began to flow in to the charitable organizations, especially to Mrs. Reading.

Then I thought up a scheme where we could share the burden with the landlord. So, I organized what we called the Taxpayers Relief Society or something--I don't remember now the name--and we got people who owned property to join and they agreed when they joined that if they had a piece of rental property they would let the people live in it because if they didn't let somebody live in the property the houses have to be torn apart board by board and burned for firewood. It was much better for the property owner to have someone living in the property and safeguard it--take care of it--than to have it vacant and demolished in a hurry. So, they agreed to let them live there rent-free providing the charities would give them enough to pay their taxes on that property. And that went a long ways toward solving the animosity problem between the two groups. From then on in, why, for several years this arrangement was continued and poor people were not evicted.

K: And that included all of Terre Haute?

S: That included all of Terre Haute and West Terre Haute, yes. Then the township trustee, across the Wabash River at West Terre Haute, he ran out of funds and he couldn't issue any relief checks. So, there was 300 or 400 people over there depending upon relief and they weren't going to see their children starve. And so, when they were told that they had no relief checks that month, they went to a Kroger store and they took everything off the shelves and passed it out to the people and left the store totally void of any foodstuff.

Now, several were arrested and put in jail for this theft but

public sentiment was so aroused over the fact that the trustee had no funds and these people were faced with starvation that Prosecutor Charles Whitlock--a bastard if there ever was one--he finally had to let these people go without a fine. So, that also aroused the business community, it realized that you'd better feed these people or you won't have any food on your shelves, you'll have street rioting and they'll take more than food the next time, they may take radios and clothing and anything else they're in need of. So, again the business community let loose of some of their ill-gotten gain and made it easier for the people to get by.

K: Did any of the local industries have any sort of relief programs for their employees or for the families of the employees? Did they have any notable methods for easing the strain of the depression?

S: I don't know of any that made any provision. Now the Goodwill Industry, during that period, they hired two brick masons--paid them out of WPA funds--and during the years of the depression they built this Goodwill building over here on Fifth Street. Two men, mind you, and two hod carriers--two brick masons and two hod carriers--built all that brick work. Once it got started the Quaker Maid, when their labels came off the can or be dented--something happen to it in processing--they would send that surplus to the Goodwill and that was made available to poor people. And so, there were various means by which people could find some degree of help.

K: Now when did you first become aware that Terre Haute and Vigo County were coming out of the depression?

S: Well, 2 or 3 years before the war broke out I began to see encouraging signs. There had been an organizing movement among the laboring people all over the nation. The Fair Labor Practices Act had permitted this and Wagner Act and sit-in strikes and all kinds of means of getting union recognition were being practiced. So, the membership of organized labor had almost doubled in those 2 or 3 years. And there was a militancy about the thing. And then, Roosevelt's forming this Home Owners Loan Corporation where you could transfer your loan from the Building Loan or a bank to the government-sponsored corporation. That saved millions of home-owners and prevented them from losing their homes. And they had nothing to pay except the interest for a period of time. Now my own home, I owed \$1,000 on it and that's the only way I saved it, was by transferring it to the land bank--the Home Owners Loan Corporation. And we had a great difficulty even paying the interest on \$1,000 during that depression period. So, that was a great relief.

And then charities had become better organized, better financed, able to meet more of the needs of the people and Roosevelt's chats from time to time were reassuring to the people and this spirit of pessimism began to fade away and optimism began to develop on a wide scale. So, I would say that his personality had a profound effect upon changing the attitudes of people and re-establishing their confidence in government and feeling that the worst was past and revolution had been avoided.

K: Can you think back now for me and tell me what you believe to be the most significant differences between Terre Haute at the end of the 1930s and Terre Haute at the beginning of the twentieth century?

S: People have automobiles that they didn't have at the turn of the century. They have better clothing. Even the poorest of the poor were dressed better than the people were back in the turn of the century. They had opportunities for an education that they didn't have at the turn of the century. I might say they had human rights that they didn't have at the turn of the century. They had more freedom to organize unions, they had more freedom of expression. They could disagree with anybody without being thrown in jail or being beaten up by strong armed men.

Back at the turn of the century it was extremely dangerous to be an organizer of labor. You took your life in your hands when you went into a coal mining district and attempted to organize the miners. The same applied to many other industries. And spies and thugs and detectives were in the employ by the thousand by private employers, to slug and intimidate workers who got out of line and this was no longer the case.

K: In a purely quantitative sense it would seem that Terre Haute had declined in the period 1900 to 1939, that its economy had declined and its population had declined, that any of those factors that one can quantify had shown a decrease--had declined somewhat.

S: Well, because the population declines doesn't mean that the standards of living decline. So many people are intrigued by bigness. They think that bigness means comfort and means all kinds of things and these ideas are purely illusionary. If there was anything to it then Chicago or New York would be an ideal place to live when we know it's reversed. You'll find more culture and more friendship and a high standard of morality in most small towns than you'll find in the big ones. So size means nothing unless it means deterioration of the community. The bigger the community the more slums you'll have, the more people you'll have go into the criminal class. So, I think we're laboring under a delusion that bigness is important. It isn't important in my opinion. I think a much wider distribution of the population would very definitely improve the standards of living and the cultural attitudes of the great masses of people.

K: It has often been stated, or at least I have seen it in print, that the recent decline of population and in the economy of Terre Haute can be attributed to some sort of conspiracy on the part of the major industrialists in this town.

S: No, I don't think so. The industrial magnet will go wherever he can make a buck. And when I say that I mean that he'll go to Korea, he'll go to China, to Hong Kong, he'll go anyplace in the world. He'll shift his business investment anywhere in the world if he can make more money by doing so. The capitalist has absolutely no morality connected with money. He is now establishing his--what do you call it--diversi-

fied industries all over the world--the multi-national. The International Harvester with 50 plants in other countries, IT&T--that's been in 70 different countries. They don't care where they make their money. They'll go where the labor is the cheapest, where they can produce the cheapest, then they'll bring the products back into the United States and undercut the workers employed here and put them out of jobs just like they've done with the television industry. There's no television sets made in the United States today--none. There are a few assembly plants but all the sets that we put into our homes today are made in foreign lands. And the capitalists don't give a damn where he makes his money and he don't care how many people he throws out of work in the United States because if he did he'd try to provide jobs for them and he'd try to save some of this industry--pay a little higher wage but keep the industry in the United States. He's not concerned about that. All he wants is an extra buck and if he can get it in Timbucktoo more readily than he can in New York or Ohio, why, that's where he'll send his money.

K: We've been talking today about the period from 1900 to about 1939, 1940, and about your personal life during that period. I don't want to take it beyond 1940 for two reasons: one is, this has been a very lengthy interview already and quite frankly I'm a little bit tired and you must be exhausted by now. The other reason is it's not that difficult to gain some of the information that we're interested in for the period 1940 to the present. There are many people around who have lived through that period whereas there are very few around, your age, with a mind as sharp as yours. But before I end the interview now I'd like to know if there is anything that you would care to add to it that you think is of significance, that we ought to be aware of, either concerning the city of Terre Haute and Vigo County and its history in this century or about your own life and the importance...?

S: Well, so many people still run Terre Haute down--they knock Terre Haute. Now I can't speak from experience in living in other cities to any great extent. I've lived in Chicago and a few cities outside of Terre Haute for short periods of time. But I consider Terre Haute a good city. I've lived here all my life practically and I remained here because we have fine schools and colleges and I saw an opportunity to educate my children at a minimum of cost. We have cultural centers; if you seek culture you can find it in our community and in a high degree. If you love art you can find it. If you love music you can find it. If you love literature you can find it. So the only limitations upon the individual who lives in Terre Haute are limitations he imposes upon himself. If he desires to become a cultured, educated, worthwhile person he can do so. It's within his power of achievement. What he most needs is someone to inspire him to seek to make his life a better life, a more productive and more worthwhile life. And if I were looking for another community to locate in--preferring it over and above Terre Haute--I don't know where I would look.

K: OK. Thank you very much. This has been a very informative interview.

Star 23 June 50



SHUBERT SEBREE

Services Set For Sebree

Services for Milton Shubert Sebree, 90, 213 N. 13th St., local book dealer and labor leader who died at 5:50 p.m. Saturday in Union Hospital, will be at 2:30 p.m. Tuesday at Thomas Funeral Home with John Laska delivering the eulogy.

Burial will be in Roselawn Memorial Park. Friends may call after 4 p.m. Monday.

Sebree was an associate of Socialist presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs and himself was nominated for congress by the Socialist Party in 1918.

He formerly was employed at North Baltimore Glass Co., Golden Rule Cutlery Co. and Wabash Cutlery Co. He also established a photography studio at 6½ Street and Wabash Avenue and later a nursery. For the past 20 years he operated a mail order business dealing in used and rare books.

He was a member of the Eugene V. Debs Foundation, Carpenters Union, Farm Bureau, NAACP, Euclid Masonic Lodge, Scottish Rite and Unitarian Universalist Church.

Surviving are the widow, Archileen; two daughters, June Sebree, McComb, Ill., and Marian Jung, Marengo, Ind.; four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

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